In Memory of
Martha Hancock Sherrod

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Whatsoever Ye Shall Ask

A BOOK OF TRUE EXPERIENCES

By Zelia M. Walters

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YOU AND YOUR CHILD

WHATSOEVER YE SHALL ASK

Dedicated to

MY HUSBAND

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CHAPTER I

Even in Thy Heart

DOCTOR Houston's friend sat staring into the fire that burned on the study hearth. He had been silent for some time, and Doctor Houston respected his silence and waited.

"I am lost in perplexity," said John Lucas at length. "My faith is tottering, if I ever had any faith. I don't suppose even you can help me. With your serene confidence, you have never been through a storm like this. I am beaten, down in the depths. I must have help from someone soon or——"

"I've been through some pretty bad storms, but I suppose no two are ever quite alike when they break over the head of different people. Do you want to talk about your storm? Sometimes a matter clears up a bit when one puts it in words."

"Is there any help in God? I mean help to straighten out these earthly tangles and failures. I am so enmeshed in them I can't seem to be interested in spiritual uplift. Is there such help?"

"Yes."

"Are you sure of it?"

"Yes."

"Then how do you get it? The heavens seem to send back my cry for help in mockery."

"The heavens! Yes. You'll get no help from the distant realm you are designating as heaven. All the

help you'll ever get will come from within yourself."

"You frighten me," said John at length. "If there is no help from a God outside of me, greater and more powerful than I am, then I am lost. I tell you there isn't anything within myself for me to call upon. I have used every resource; tried every bit of wisdom I possess. I am as empty as a burned-out fire. I hoped you could tell me of some way of reaching God before I give up completely."

"I told you there was help. I mean it. I know. I have tried it. And I don't wonder that you are frightened when I tell you that your help must come from within. I was frightened too when I first realized that. But when you think about it longer, it is a very comforting thought.

"Now consider this aspect of it. The Spirit within you that Jesus designated as the Holy Spirit, which is an outpouring of God upon His sons in the flesh, is yours alone. It is deeply concerned with your welfare, your growth, your success, your happiness. Its sole business for time and probably for eternity is to make you a fine and powerful and happy person. It is striving continually against your selfishness, your timidity, your inertia, trying to bring into realization the qualities you inherit as a son of God.

"You don't have to pray to a far-off God, who in your human limitations you are likely to picture as being so busy that He may not have any time to give to your little problems. Call upon the Spirit within, which is never too busy to attend to you, which

knows all about you, your sins and failures and aspirations and repentances, which does not consider anything that concerns you foolish or trifling. Which would you rather call upon, this close, warm, intimate God or a far-off stranger?

"If you were appealing for help on the material plane, whom would you rather ask: a friend who loves you and knows all about you, or your representative in Washington, say, who when he gets your letter of appeal will perhaps put it down with ten thousand other letters from other constituents? When you learn all that it means, you will find that this Spirit is a great blessing that God has given us to dwell here with us in our own house of life to bring to us all the resources of the Eternal."

"It sounds fine the way you say it, but I tell you there is nothing within. My house of life is cold and dark. There is no divinity there."

"Yes, it is there. You have covered it over so that you do not perceive it, but it is still there, working for your temporal and eternal salvation. Why else did you think of asking me these questions? Why else were you vaguely reaching out for God to help you?

"See if this illustration will clear your mind:

"Suppose you have been out to dinner and come home after dark. You step into your house and press the button beside the door. Nothing happens. You know the light should have gone on, but all is darkness. You know that your house is wired for electricity, and you put in lamp bulbs. Why then are you in

darkness? You decide to call upon some outside help. You grope your way to the telephone and call up the power company. 'I need light,' you say. 'Is the power off?'

"The man at the power company office answers courteously: 'The trouble must be at your end of the line. There is nothing wrong at the powerhouse. Electricity is going out over all our territory. Everyone else has light. I'll send a man out to check up at your end.'

"In a short time the man arrives. He goes into the basement with his flashlight and finds a fuse blown out, replaces it, and your house springs into light.

"Now your spiritual condition is about the same as the condition of a householder with a blown-out fuse. The central powerhouse is all right. The Superintendent of the power system (God) has not neglected His job. Your house is equipped to receive the power. But somewhere a connection isn't working or a fuse is blown. You look around and say: 'Lots of other people have light. I wonder why I can't get any. I must be a sort of a stepchild of God. He withholds His favor from me.'

"You'd be surprised to know how many people think they are stepchildren of the Eternal. My own opinion is that there are no stepchildren. There are prodigal children who have run away from home, but the home is still there with all its abundance, and they can go back to it whenever they are tired of the hardships of the far country.

"To go back to our parable of the electric lights: If you think the matter over you will realize that when a fuse is blown out it means that you put an improper load upon your house system. As a result you lose your connection temporarily. When you are out of connection with the divine power it is because you put an excess load upon the connection. I don't know what your excess load is, but I am sure you can trace it down. Usually the load that causes breaking is willful sin. It might be doubt or fear; it might be resentment or greed. Whatever it is, you can remove it, put in a new fuse, and your house of life will receive the light."

"That's a striking illustration," said John. " 'Almost thou persuadest me.' I know what the load is that broke my connection, all right. I suppose you are the man sent out by the power company to fix up the connection."

Doctor Houston smiled. "No, we'll have to leave the analogy of the powerhouse at this point. The divine Superintendent can't send in somebody to fix up the connection. You have to do that yourself. But if the Superintendent should send me, I could only point out what the difficulty is, but at that point my ministry must cease. No one but the householder can remove the load and put in the new connection. And it is not so easy as changing a fuse. It may be a matter of blood and tears, of Gethsemane and Calvary, but they last only a little while, and after them comes the ineffable glory of the Resurrection morn-

ing. Do you want the resurrection of all the fine things that life has ever held for you? Then make haste to reconnect yourself with divine power."

"I do want a resurrection, and I've been through a Gethsemane. I wonder if I could do it. I wonder if I have enough faith. You make it seem a simple straightforward procedure when one is with you, but when I go away and the outside pressure begins, will I be able to hold firm?"

"That is just where your God within helps you. Just get light enough to see Him and begin to know Him. If you haven't any faith, light a little candle of hope and seek Him. That will be enough to let you see His face. Then claim what has been promised: strength, guidance, help, security. You'll get it."

"I need money very badly. That inner God will hardly hand me any money," said John with a wry smile.

"You'll be surprised. Money is merely our symbol for things of value. Where do all things of value come from? Of course from God, the great overshadowing God of creation. He has filled the universe with riches. He continually pours out upon His children the spiritual substance that materializes into things of value. He pours out His ideas upon the great scientists, inventors, financiers, and executives, and they turn ideas into articles of value. But these great leaders of men are not His favored children. He pours out His ideas upon common men like you

and me. We too can get the things of value according to our needs. Our needs, did I say? No, according to our faith. Your God within knows you need money. Give Him a chance. He will help you get it. But don't forget that there may be some things you need more than you need money. He knows that too, and He will help you get them."

"Then," said John, almost as if speaking to himself, "I'm to go out and try again."

"Well, not exactly that. As you said, you've already used every atom of skill and wisdom you possess. It would be futile just to retrace the old tracks again. You once knew your Bible fairly well, and I think you will recall that Jesus said: 'The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father doing'; and again, 'The words that I say unto you I speak not from myself; but the Father abiding in me doeth his works.' Does that suggest your course of action? Go home and get quiet before the Lord. Remove the load, whatever it is. You can do that instantaneously, as Jesus suggested when He said to the sick man, 'Thy sins are forgiven.' Wait until the Spirit within speaks and tells you what to do. Then get up and do it without a doubt or fear."

"Are you actually telling me just to ignore my problems and wait for a voice to speak to me? I can't believe that that ever happens."

"It does. It happens every day to thousands of men and women of faith. There will be no letters of fire written on the wall before you. No flaming angel

will descend from heaven to stand beside you. At least I don't think those things will happen. But a voice will speak. Perhaps you'll just hear it deep within you. Perhaps it will speak through human lips. That is the only kind of voice God has that is audible to our ears of flesh. But you'll get your answer if you have the faith to claim it."

"My faith is so weak."

"A man came to Jesus once with his whole being poured out in a prayer for one he loved. Jesus said, 'If thou canst [believe],' and he cried out, 'I believe; help thou mine unbelief.' Let that be your prayer until you begin to get assurance."

"I'll do it," cried John Lucas, "I'll take my remnant of faith and call upon this God within me and claim the fulfillment of the promises that were given for me."

"Now," said Doctor Houston, "you've taken the first step on the upward path. Go and pray, and I'll be praying too. Our double prayer will make a connection with the power and the glory that will never be broken."

Chapter II

John Lucas' Second Visit

When the study door opened and John Lucas looked in, about a month after his first visit, Doctor Houston's face lighted up with a smile. For this was a different John Lucas. The drooping shoulders had been straightened, the defeated look was gone. Fear no longer looked out of his eyes, and he seemed to bear confidence like a banner before him.

"I have come," he said, "to have you give me some more of that miracle-working power."

"Not I," said Doctor Houston hastily. "God."

Only one thing ever seemed to disturb Doctor Houston. If anyone offered him praise or credit for what happened as a result of applying his teachings, he disclaimed all credit immediately as if it were a dangerous thing to receive.

"Yes, I know," said John. "But you did point out the way, you know. If anyone had told me a month ago that such a miracle could happen, I would not have believed him. But it has happened, and happened to me. I wake up at night overcome with the wonder of it and with my feeling of gratitude."

"That's a fine way to feel about it; but tell me of the miracle."

"Oh, it doesn't look like a miracle; I couldn't call it that to anyone but you. It seems to be a routine

business occurrence, a matter of my earning a good commission. But after what happened here that night and—and afterward, when I went home, I know it to be a miracle.

"You recall what you told me that day, that the God that would help me was within, that I must speak to Him quietly there, and that I must wait in faith for His direction. The 'in faith' was the hard part for me. I just didn't have any. But I did what the man in the Scriptures did on the day of the Transfiguration. I said, 'Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.' Then I tried to get quiet, as you told me. I tried to say, 'Thy will be done,' and to mean it, but I was afraid.

"The thing I was most conscious of was that I needed some money right away, or I would lose my home and my business and everything I had saved through the years. I was afraid God's will would not be for me to have money. You see the state I was in—not a fit subject for answered prayer. The more I tried to be quiet the more turbulent the storm seemed to grow. No voice or direction came to me, and after a while my prayer was just one cry, 'Help thou mine unbelief.' Nothing happened.

"I soon went to bed, and I probably was deeper down in the pit than I had ever been before. I was so exhausted that I fell asleep immediately and slept all night. I awoke in the morning with a direction as plain in my mind as if someone had come and spoken the words: 'Go down to Cutter Street.' It

gave me a queer feeling to have that standing out so plain. I got up and made my toilet. I found the heavy feeling was gone though nothing at all had happened.

"I went to breakfast, and my wife and sons looked at me in amazement. They had been almost afraid to speak to me during the last few weeks because I would fly off in a temper for no reason at all. Now when I eased the tension by telling a joke they began to laugh, and soon breakfast was like old times. I dressed to go out. I said good-by to the family, and got in the car.

"I told myself that I was a fool, that nothing could happen down on Cutter Street to help me. But there was the direction as insistent as before: 'Go down to Cutter Street.' I went. I suppose you know where Cutter Street is? No? Well, come to think of it, a good many people do not know. It runs back of Broad Street at Sixth. It's a mean, run-down little street now, though in the early days of the city it used to be more important. There is a big, dilapidated, empty warehouse on the corner. That lot has a triangle back of it belonging to the city, but it is just so much wasteland left there at the laying out of new streets.

"I drove the length of the street, then turned round to come back. I stopped the car before the old warehouse. A dilapidated sign was tacked to the front: 'For Sale. Communicate with Mrs. Agnes Tallent, Miami, Florida.' A bit of conversation heard

some weeks before leaped into my mind. 'Mrs. Tallent is not coming back to town. She is going to live in Florida. She has sold everything but the warehouse, and she would take any reasonable offer for that.' Then beside that ranged another remark I had heard: 'They're planning to put up a building for a medical center if they can find a piece of land close to the center of town and not too high-priced. Nearly all the doctors and dentists of the city are interested. They would all have their offices in the building with a central exchange.'

"There's no use boring you with details, but I bought the land from Mrs. Tallent for the committee of the medical association. I managed all the details, and my commission was enough to ease the financial strain and give me time to start something else. I have made a fresh start and my way is clear. I am going places now, and I'll not turn up any more blind alleys. I have a new Silent Partner. With Him I'm going to learn a lot of new things."

Doctor Houston was beaming when he remarked:

"As you said, nearly any businessman would call that just an ordinary business transaction, such a one as any man might plan and carry through."

"Yes, I know. But it wasn't an ordinary one. The whole thing is out of the ordinary class. I was at the end of my rope, so beaten down that everything I tried to do failed. I was no longer capable of thinking of anything to lift myself out of the hole. Why did I wake up thinking, 'Go down to Cutter Street'?

Why did I stop my car in front of the warehouse, and then remember those two remarks? Why did I find Mrs. Tallent eager to sell and the committee quite as eager to buy? Why did all the advantages of the location for that particular building range themselves clearly in my mind so that I was able to show them to the committee? Even the waste triangle will be an advantage—it's to be used as a parking ground for cars. Why was every obstacle cleared away so that the whole deal went through in record time? I know the answer. You said that God within me was always trying to help me. So far I have been blocking Him quite effectively. But this time I got a brief vision of what He was doing and stood out of His way. Then I did what the inner voice advised and did and said the right things."

"That's a good idea of yours about standing out of God's way. Most of us do manage to block Him quite often with our frantic busyness, our errors, our running in the wrong direction, our greed, our doubts and fears. Your 'standing out of His way' is a way of saying, 'Be still, and know that I am God.' "

"I am trying to get still enough to know that. But now you know why I am back. I need more. I am quite shameless about asking. By worldly standards I ought to be satisfied with the favor I have received, and now I should stand back and give some other fellow a chance. But you told me I was one of God's heirs and that we all have a right to all the things that He has promised. If that is true no one else will

lack anything because I come right up and claim my share of the inheritance."

"No, no one will lack because you claim what God has promised you. And you can be quite free in claiming what is your own. Not only is it yours, but Jesus urged us to come and claim our blessings. 'Ask,' He said, in the imperative, 'and ye shall receive, that your joy may be made full.' You look to me as if you had got some of that joy already."

"I have. I have indeed. I am not congratulating myself over this as I have over big sales in the past. This is all different. I don't figure that I did it at all, and the reason I am walking on air is that I have seen my faith reach out and touch God. Some people would say that it sounds blasphemous to say that I have found God because I have been successful in a business deal. Does it seem so to you?"

"No, no. I think you are right; I think you have found Him right there in the business that is your daily concern. If that inner God isn't with you in your business He isn't with you at all. I believe in success in terms of its newer definition, not in the kind held up in the inspirational books of the past, wherein one was exhorted to pump up an earth-made balloon, filling it with shrewdness, thrift, energy, and will power until it would float one a little way above the ground where all the failures groveled together.

"I never did care much for that kind of success; it was measured solely by money and place. But I believe in real success, which is doing your God-

given job in the best possible way and reaping the just fruits of your labor. I believe in God in the business office, the factory, the store, the household, the schoolroom, the bank, the councils of labor, and the affairs of state. You have seen what happens when God goes with you. Never leave Him behind again."

"I never mean to. Now I can say, 'Thy will be done,' knowing that only the best can happen. But I want more, more faith, more power to work out these things. Tell me how to get more, how to become as sure as you are. Sometimes I am shaken; I don't feel sure."

"I have heard our friends speak of your excellent golf scores. How did you get to be that kind of player?"

John Lucas grinned understandingly. "By practice," he said. "An expert taught me, and after that I practiced whenever I could."

"Exactly. That's the way you'll get strong faith and more power. Practice unceasingly to improve what you have."

"You say just the right thing. When I came last month your electric-light illustration made me see what was wrong—the excess load and the blown fuse and the fact that the powerhouse was delivering power, and it was there for me as soon as I could take it. And now my golf game, which is the result of practice. Believe me, I will practice, my Spirit and I together. We will carry on the business and share the profits. I shall want to talk with you

more about that. I suspect you know of ways in which the profits may be used so that other heirs of God may receive light."

Chapter III

Is Fear Defeating You?

Doctor Houston looked into his study from the hall and paused at the door. What was to be said to the man who sat waiting? How did one deal with a man who was possessed by a personal devil—and withal such a quiet, mild devil that the man probably could not be convinced of any danger?

"But," reflected the Doctor, "there is something that can be said. There is help for him. God doesn't abandon any of His children to such demon domination as this. He wants to help even the helpless Gilbert Schoen." So with a swift prayer for wisdom and understanding to give the right counsel, Doctor Houston entered the study.

"How do you do, Schoen, I'm glad to see you," he said as the man rose to meet him.

"Thanks, Doctor. I've often heard of—the way you help people get back on their feet, and as I am down and out I thought I'd come in and see you. Maybe you can tell me what to do. I'm not a very religious man. I believe in God all right, and I used to go to Sunday school when I was a kid. I joined the church when I was fifteen, but I haven't been working at it for a good many years now." He grinned at his feeble joke. Seeing the Doctor giving him serious attention, he sobered. "Let's see, where was I?"

"You were saying you hadn't been working at being a Christian. A good phrase, Schoen. To be a Christian you certainly have to keep in practice twenty-four hours a day. You have to remember God as you hope He is remembering you—all the time."

"Don't get me wrong, Doctor. I haven't been such a bad fellow. I haven't been stealing or cheating or anything like that. I've had bad luck, but I know lots of men worse than I am who seem to have all the good luck going. I can't figure it out. Maybe you can help me."

"About the bad luck? I haven't any magic charm to change your luck."

"No, I didn't think anything like that, Doctor. I don't believe in such falderal. But I heard that you got a good job for Jim Folger last week. I thought maybe you could tell me where I might get something."

For a moment Doctor Houston was assailed by a feeling of helplessness. How could he, retired and living on a quiet suburban street, hand out jobs to all the needy and dispossessed? And in increasing numbers the needy were looking to him, confident that he could help them if he only would. Then he steadied. He was not helpless. All the power of the Eternal was behind him. The sad and wandering children were right in looking to him, for they saw not him, but the omnipotent God whose humble emissary he was.

"God, help me now to speak the strong word of Truth in love," he prayed. Then he said, "Schoen, I can't pull a job out of a hat as a magician produces a rabbit, and if I did have a job it would do no good to give it to you, for you couldn't keep it."

Then he feared the man was going to weep. His chin quivered like a hurt child's and his throat moved convulsively.

"This is spiritual surgery," thought Doctor Houston. "And it must go on, for otherwise the case is hopeless. Jesus had to speak the strong, sharp word sometimes, 'sharp as a two-edged sword.' I must not turn back."

"I know I've had bad luck with my jobs, Doctor. But it seems if I could get one that suited me, I could hold on to it, unless some more bad luck turned up."

"Let us review your case and see if we can find the weak spot."

"No use holding post-mortems," said Schoen sullenly. "I've had them and lost them, there's no getting around that."

"It's not quite a post-mortem. And we must go over it. When you were a boy in school, working out a problem on the blackboard, what did you do when you found your method was all wrong? Of course you rubbed it out and started over again. You didn't try to patch it up, leaving the old mistakes standing and changing a figure here and there. What you needed then was a fresh start. What you need now

is a fresh start and don't think you are alone in this. Thousands are facing just such a situation. When we have been working the problems of life by the wrong method and got the blackboard full of errors, what we need to do is to erase the whole thing and start afresh. Most of us try to cross out a figure here and there and patch it up and make it come out right. It's a rather hopeless endeavor. So I say, let's go back over at least a year of your life, and see where the error was made. I can't erase the errors for you, but maybe I can help you find out what they are and then you can erase them. I know you've had three jobs in the past year. Tell me about them."

"I don't see what good it will do. It wasn't my fault I lost them. I'm not a drinking man, I'm not lazy, and I don't cheat."

"It is your fault you lost them, and unless you can see that, you can't be helped. Haven't you been getting and losing jobs all your life?"

The man looked so stricken that Doctor Houston almost regretted the words, but he said no more. And after a minute Schoen burst forth:

"Maybe you can see it; I can't, and God knows I've tried. I've prayed and prayed. Listen, here's what happened as far as I can tell."

He plunged into the story of the three jobs. His account was long and rambling, and Doctor Houston let him talk. For the facts were emerging through his many words. One job he had lost because he had refused to take responsibility and make a decision in

the boss's absence. His failure had cost the firm a large and profitable order; so they had no more use for Schoen. The second company he worked for found itself obliged to reduce its force, and Schoen had been one of those let go. In the third job his immediate superior had taken a violent dislike to him and had just waited for an excuse to dismiss him.

"The first time it might have been my fault," he argued in conclusion. "But I was afraid to decide. If I'd been wrong they'd have blamed me. But the second and third times were not my fault. I couldn't help it that the Collins Company had to let some of the men go, and I couldn't help it that Winger hated me and wanted to get rid of me."

"If you were at the head of a small business and found that income was going down and you had to let half of your force go, which men would be the ones to go?"

He answered honestly: "The ones that were of the least use to me."

"Exactly. Now take the next case. If you found that an employee hated you, was resentful of all you said or did, what would you do about that? Remember that hatred and resentment grow. They spread like poison gas over an organization. They are bound to work damage."

"But it was Winger who hated me," he said in surprise.

"And you liked Winger? No? Well, just when

did you begin to dislike him? From the very first day on the job, wasn't it? From the time you first saw him and he rubbed you the wrong way?"

"Yes," said Schoen almost inaudibly.

"Now can you see for yourself what was wrong in each job?"

"In the first I was afraid, in the second a slacker, in the third resentful. Yes, I see it all now and I see more. I've always been a coward, a whiner, an underdog, and I always will be. I might as well jump off the bridge today. There's nothing ahead for a failure like me."

He bowed his face upon his hands, and now for the first time Doctor Houston smiled. The spiritual cancer was uncovered; it needed only to be healed.

"In the first part of your statement you may have put the matter accurately, but not in the last part," he said.

"What do you mean?"

"You have been a failure and an underdog, but you will not continue to be. You've stepped out of that darkened estate into the full light of a son of God."

"Tell me honestly, Doctor, do you think I could start again and do better? Remember I am nearly forty. I've had these bad habits all my life. Do you think there is hope?"

"I know there is. I've seen it work out too many times to doubt it."

"But what shall I do to get over these things?"

"Call upon God to be your strength and direction."

"I don't know how to call upon God. I've tried to pray. It's only empty form. Where shall I find God?"

"Look within."

The man looked at him startled.

"There's no hope for me there."

"There must be; it is your only help."

"Then I have none; there is only emptiness within."

"Probably about half the people who come to me for teaching say that when I tell them to find God. But everyone who has tried has found Him. He is there in your own life, sadly overcovered perhaps with your fears and doubts and sins of various kinds, but He's still there. You are His son; you cannot escape that. He is always calling you. That is why you are so desperately unhappy and ineffectual. Deep down in your heart you hear that call. You try to turn away from it. But there is no fulfillment of any kind in your life before you return to the Father's house. I know you'd rather think of some high God far away somewhere on a throne of glory, who might be induced to grant you certain favors if you knew just the right word to win His indulgence. There is no help in such a vision. Your God dwells with you. But don't get the idea that because He chooses such a lowly dwelling He is weak and circumscribed. He is omnipotent, and His power is yours to use as far as you are able to take hold of it.

"Now, I am going to give you a few words as a

sort of general direction that in my experience I have found helpful. But after that no more. You will get the rest of your direction and wisdom at first hand, as you ought.

"First, never again say or think that you are afraid or weak or incapable. If the thought ever crosses your mind say at once to yourself: 'This is not true. I am God's son, and by His power I am strong and brave and wise. I can do all things through Christ, who strengthens me.'

"Secondly, when you seem to come up against a blank wall, do not stand there and beat your head against it. Sit down quietly with your Father. Give thanks for His presence and love. Then wait until He tells you what to do.

"You might begin on that right now. Get quiet, thank God for all He has given you and is about to give you. Then ask Him to help you train yourself out of your weakness. You must practice, you know, just as you would practice music if He had called you to be a musician. Let us both be silent with God and see what He will say to us."

For a few minutes there was no sound in the room. Then Schoen began to speak slowly.

"There is a way to train myself out of fear and inefficiency. I think I've known it for a long time, but I just didn't have enough resolution to do it. I shall do something I've been afraid to do. I shall set a certain task for myself and do it, though I may quail with the fear of meeting ridicule and criticism. After

that I shall begin to work at something whether I get paid or not, and I shall do every piece of work as carefully and perfectly as if it were to pass the highest inspection. I shall let no day pass without doing some service for another of God's children. I shall count my blessings of the past and present and give thanks for them."

Doctor Houston was beaming. "Why, man, you've taken such a big forward step today that it seems as if you must have spiritual seven-league boots. Just keep on going.

"And now there's one thing I want you to do before you leave. Ask God where you shall go to seek that new job, that good job, in which you can manifest yourself perfectly and give worth-while service."

Again the two men sat quiet. After a while Schoen smiled.

"I've thought of something. It seems fantastic, but I'm going to try. Do you really think it was God that put it into my mind, and do you think He's going to help me put it into action? It's so simple and it's right at hand, but before this minute I never saw it. If only I can interest this one man. I wonder—my record hasn't been good——"

"Steady! Steady! No doubts or fears either now or when you talk with the man. If this is your job you'll get it, for God will be with you in the interview. If He should close that door, just say, 'Thank You, God, for not letting me start in the wrong direction.' Then wait for another leading."

"I'll do it. I feel so brave now. But, Doctor, when I get away from you, the old doubts will return."

"Yes, they will. You must be prepared for that. You don't get the grand symphony of life in one lesson. You may grasp its beauty and resolve to learn it now, but you'll have to keep practicing day after day. There is a phrase in the Lord's Prayer that you need to keep in mind every day, 'Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.' That's for you. When you begin to doubt yourself and God, say, 'Lead us not into temptation.' When negative forces seem about to down you say, 'Deliver us from evil.' And He will deliver you from every evil, and the temptations will fade away in His presence. Believe me, my friend. Unnumbered Christians have tried this. They found the courage and strength and wisdom they need. So can you.

"When you go out of here remember you are not the man who came in. The Gilbert Schoen who came in was a weak failure, quite sure that he never could amount to anything. The Gilbert Schoen who goes out is a new man, strong in the power of the Lord. He is on his way to conquer. He'll meet many hindrances and barriers on his way to his objective, but nothing can turn him back.

"I thank God that I have seen you cast the old worthless life aside and take on the new life."

Schoen arose.

"I'll not try to say my thanks in words. I know what you want—you'll see my gratitude in a changed

life. With God beside me I'll show you that. And when the going is hard I'll not come whining back to you for my courage to be bolstered up; I'll say, 'God, you promised by the words of Jesus. I need help now. Stand by me.' "

"God bless you as He has already done," said Doctor Houston.

The Doctor thought of Schoen at times during the next few weeks. He wondered what the thing was that Schoen had been afraid to do but still had set out to do. He wondered too what the "fantastic" venture might be. Then amid the pressure of other interests Schoen was half forgotten.

It was four months before Schoen returned in person. But this was a new Schoen, a confident, assured person who radiated cheer. Doctor Houston said as much.

"I see a new Gilbert Schoen, yet not entirely new: this is the man who went out of here with God some months ago."

"Yes, I am that man. I thought you might like to see the fruits of your labor with me. I'm beginning to see the fruits of mine, and I know that it gives a man power to go on.

"The hard task to which I set myself, somewhat as a craven knight would go out to slay a dragon of which he was terribly afraid—in the hope that he might also slay his cowardice—I must tell you about that. I had quarreled with a member of my family. Then I said it was all his fault. He had cheated me,

treated me badly. I treated him badly too, only at that time I never acknowledged it. When I left here I went to him and asked his pardon for all my share of the quarrel. I can hardly tell you what that did to me. It released courage and power. I went home to make plans around an idea I had had.

"I knew how to make one small article of food well. In my youth I had worked for a baker for a while and liked it, though afterward I thought I must have a loftier job. I spent the last money I could raise experimenting with my own special sweet wafer until I could make it inexpensively. Then putting my pride in my pocket, I took a basket on my arm and asked God to walk forth with me. I came home with an empty basket and a pocketful of small coins.

"The rest of my story can almost be told in a sentence. I rented a vacant room on Main Street last week, hired two people to help me, put in an attractive window display—and I can't keep up with my orders."

The man's voice was breaking toward the end of the sentence. Then both men sat quiet, beaming at each other. Perhaps it may seem a small thing that Schoen was making good sales; nothing to be so exalted about. But when God walks forth with a man, that marks one of the major events in his life.

Chapter IV

Discovering the Healing Law

MANY PEOPLE who came to Doctor Houston entered his study in an unhappy and bitter mood. Some he could send away in peace.

The woman who faced him this morning looked both unhappy and ill. She made no appeal for sympathy but spoke as if in a hurry to get a distasteful business over.

"I'm not religious, Doctor Houston; indeed I rarely go to church. I came to talk with you at the insistence of my mother-in-law."

"That will probably keep peace in the family," said Doctor Houston.

She smiled briefly. "We're in no danger of not keeping peace. She is my mainstay in life. But I am—not well. She says there is a woman in her neighborhood whom you cured of cancer."

"Oh, no. I am not a physician. I have cured no one."

Dismay looked out of her eyes. "But they said——" She hesitated.

"Yes, I know. There is a woman in town whom God cured of cancer. Probably more than one. The woman you speak of talked with me. She was healed because she took God at His word, and believed He would cure her. That, you see, is different from my curing her."

"Yes, I see. I suppose she had a great deal of faith."

"Well, at least as much as a grain of mustard seed. It takes that much to move a mountain, you know."

"I suppose there is no use in my telling you my troubles then."

"There might be. Tell me if you wish. Perhaps I can give you counsel. I have had a great deal of experience with troubled people."

"But you see, I cannot even believe about the woman's healing. I cannot believe that God will set aside the laws of the universe for the need of one individual, no matter how much faith she has or how devoutly she prays. That would be saying that God changes His mind. And what kind of God would that be?"

"Not any better God than those in the old pagan pantheons. Jove could get in a temper and mix things up or adopt a mortal favorite and work miracles for her. But the Eternal cannot behave so capriciously.

"You cannot believe in a God that changes His mind. Nor can I. But I believe that God's will toward us is always good. We are His children. He has filled the universe with beauty and substance to nurture us. He doesn't want us to be sick, or poor, or hateful, or unhappy. When we do get into trouble it is because we have wandered away from God and have turned aside His gracious intentions toward us."

"Oh, if I only could believe that! that God's will toward me and those I love is good. I'm afraid I can-

not. There is too much in my life to contradict such a belief.

"I am not well. I have been to a clinic. The doctors there tell me I have a dreaded disease, far advanced. They say I need immediate surgical care if I am to live. I want to live; I have two children under ten. I cannot go to the hospital for the operation. We cannot possibly raise the money it would require.

"My husband has kept his job, and by planning and skimping everywhere else we have managed to hold onto our home. But my husband's salary has been cut twice in the last year. We can just live and keep out of debt. The money for hospital expenses is simply out of reach, there's no use thinking about it. I haven't even told my husband of the visit to the clinic. He is trying so hard and has been so patient and uncomplaining through all this hard time. What will this do to him when he must know? It is too cruel that such a thing should come upon us. He needs me, the children need me, and I seem to be sinking into a pit from which I cannot climb out. How can I think God's will is good?"

"I still think it is: for you, your husband, and your children. And I think that a year from now you will look back at this hour of despair with wonder that you could have been so blind.

"If you had plenty of money today you would go to the hospital tomorrow, and perhaps you would get well, but not surely. Have you thought that per-

haps it is a blessing in disguise that you have not the money to go to the hospital? Your lack of resources has driven you into a corner, so to speak, where you have an opportunity to find the right answer to your problem. To go to the hospital may seem to be the easier way, the steep upward path of faith, the more difficult way. But after you have learned this path of faith you will find that it is actually the easier way as well as the only effective way. When you say, 'Thy will be done.' and then follow God, you will learn the way of peace and quietness through all the storms of life.

"You've been pushed into a corner where you have to stop and try to find out what God means by all the promises and assurances He has given through Jesus. If you had been comfortable you never would have stopped to search these promises. Most people have to be driven quite to the wall before they will pause and see what God means.

"With all these other careless ones you may give a formal adherence to the religion you learned as a child, or you may reject it altogether. If you read God's promises or recall them, you dismiss them as impractical by saying they apply only on the spiritual plane. Who told you God's rich promises belong only to the spiritual plane? What is the spiritual plane anyway, and how is it separated from our daily living? Doesn't God know that He placed the spirits of His children in physical bodies that need food and health and clothing and shelter? Does He

think those spirits can thrive if their earthly house is falling in ruins? Can you imagine the Eternal so blind to our needs?

"Jesus could not. He gave those golden promises to crowds of plain folk, the average people of His time. He said in various phrases many times over, "Ask and ye shall receive." The humble people who heard Him must have thought He meant just that. He was not inviting a few superior intellects into a secret priesthood, where by a difficult and intricate technique they might learn to compel the favor of the Eternal: He meant those promises for you and me. And for a few who could take God at His word they have worked all down the ages. But most of us cannot believe in them even yet. It is just too much to expect God to be at hand to hear us when we call upon Him. It seems too good to be true. Does it seem to you too good to be true?"

"I am afraid I still cannot believe in miracles, in God setting aside law because I ask Him to."

"No, but a part of your prayer will be 'Lord, help me to keep thy laws perfectly so that my body may never know sickness.' You know, when you are sick it is because you have sinned."

"But," she protested, "I'm not any worse than many people whom I know who are quite healthy."

"We cannot measure the sins and penalties of others. We must consider you. A woman of your intelligence knows that all the sick are sinning. By that I do not mean that they are liars or thieves or

that they deliberately break any moral law. I am aware that some very saintly people are sick. But they are sinners in that they have broken the physical laws. So we are not going to ask God to break any of His laws but just to put you back inside the law. You think it cannot be done. I say it can, in a quite natural and law-abiding way.

"From the days of old we have spoken of sudden or wonderful healings that we did not understand as miracles, meaning something supernatural, outside of or above the laws of nature. In that sense there are no miracles, and I think there never have been. But the healings took place, and continue to take place today. They work by a law that most of humanity has not yet discovered. A few have discovered it, sometimes stumbling on it and not comprehending it at all. But there are people in the world today who know there is such a law and are trying to find out about its workings.

"Look at a familiar analogy: Suppose fifty years ago someone had said to your grandfather, 'A man spoke in London, and I heard him; in fact he was heard all around the world!' How your grandfather would have ridiculed such a statement. 'Such a thing cannot be done unless God should suspend His laws and work a miracle,' your grandfather might well have said. But today a very stupid person can turn a knob and hear a voice from London, and it is well within the bounds of possibility that one man may speak and everyone in the world hear him.

"What has happened? We have merely discovered a law that the world didn't know about a hundred years ago. Radio was here as a principle all the time, but it hadn't been discovered. Is there anyone rash enough to say we have discovered everything in the universe? There are probably many more laws waiting to be discovered, and among them the laws that control the body in relation to the immortal spirit.

"Jesus knew that law. He wanted His church to use it to confirm its divine origin and to bless mankind. A few of every generation have believed it and have worked the so-called miracles. But the church let the great gift slip from its slack hands while it wrangled about creeds and government. We must win it back. Materialistic physicians confronted with one of these 'miracle' healings talk wisely of spontaneous healing. They are right. It is spontaneous natural healing. But the great unknown law has been called in to do it.

"We call on that law when we become still and know God, when we commune with Him in the way that Jesus called abiding in God, when we put ourselves in perfect accord with His will, when we say: 'My Father, here I am in bitter need because I strayed from Thee. Now I come back, and put all my trust in Thee. Thy will be done.' Then our heart rises up in joy as we realize that God's will for us is good, always good, and only good. There cannot be evil in God's will. What silly children we are ever to fear it.

"Are you ready now to make that kind of a prayer of faith?"

She could not answer at once, and he waited. The silence seemed to grow vibrant with the unseen presence. They both felt it.

"The Healer is here," said Doctor Houston.

"Yes, I know. It seems so strange to me to say, 'Thy will be done,' and not feel that I am abandoning myself to inevitable disaster. To say it and know I am abandoning myself to good is an idea that overwhelms me, but I am ready to make the prayer. Shall I say it aloud?"

"Not unless you wish. You are speaking to the abiding Father. I will pray with you too."

They both sat with closed eyes.

After a while the woman straightened.

"I am healed," she said, breathlessly.

"Yes, thanks be to God. Go out from here healed, and no matter what outside temptation presses upon you, keep the serenity that comes of your knowledge that you have asked and received of God. And don't forget that He is here to answer any other of your needs too."

She had looked awed and quiet as she said, "I am healed," but now a great joy flooded her face.

"For other needs," she said. "Of course. To lift the load for my beloved. Oh, how can we ever be thankful enough for this kind of a God!"

She arose to go.

"I *am* healed," she said again. "The gnawing pain

is gone. I feel free and oh, so joyful!"

"Once more let me repeat my warning. We are such doubting Thomases that we just can't quite believe in God's good gifts. You now are tempted not to believe. You said 'I *am* healed' as if it were too much to believe. Yet you know by every evidence of body and spirit that the gift has been received. As you go home and about your affairs keep repeating, 'Leave us not in temptation.' When you say the Lord's prayer put stress upon that phrase, for you will be tempted not to believe.

"If you tell your family or friends you are healed they may look at you pityingly, think you are self-hypnotized. They may say: 'Yes, you are better. But you'd better have the operation, for the condition may come back.' And unless you continually gird up your spirit with eternal strength, after a while you will be saying, 'What if it comes back?' Then you will feel disquieting symptoms, and after a while the disease will be back in all its terror.

"What did Jesus say were the works of God? To believe. To believe not just with your intellect but with all of you. To know God's promises are true and to act as if they are. That may be what Jesus meant when He warned healed persons to sin no more lest a worse thing befall them.

"Now as your spiritual adviser in this matter I warn you to keep out of the pit of doubt. Flee temptation. Know with your whole being that God is always in the process of keeping His promises.

Go out to express your dependence on Him so that others will see it in your deeds and want to know more of this strength which you have found."

She stood looking at him thoughtfully.

"Thank you. I am sure I needed that warning. But now I shall draw that eternal strength closer about me, until I can say with Paul, 'None of these things move me.' I realize I have not only a healing but a responsibility. I'll not forget."

It was six months later that Doctor Houston received a letter from the woman. The family had moved away. A fine new opportunity had come to her husband shortly after her visit to the study. Now she was writing to tell of all the wonders that had come. Her concluding paragraph said:

"I am so well, so full of energy that I never tire. This isn't a check-up on the state of my health. You don't need that. You and I know what happened that day I came to you. I only want to tell you that I do keep my sacred charge in mind and that with my splendid health I am able to do things which, I pray, may advance the coming of God's kingdom."

Chapter V

The Healer Is Here!

THE WOMAN who waited in Doctor Houston's study looked as if she carried a heavy burden. She sat forward in her chair, tense, unresting. Her eyes were sunken and shadowed as though from many sleepless nights.

When Doctor Houston came in he greeted her warmly.

"Why, how do you do, Mrs. Trent. I'm glad to see you."

"I didn't know whether you would remember me," she said. "I go to your church sometimes. I like to hear the sermons. But I'm not a very good churchwoman, I'm afraid."

"There's room for improvement in most of us, I suspect. I know there is in me."

She gave a fleeting smile at that. He went on to talk of the fine weather and asked her if she had noticed that his climbing roses were almost out.

No, she had not noticed the roses. "And I'm very fond of roses," she added.

"You must notice them when you go out. I think they mean always to be looked at."

"Yes," she said. Then he waited, for he saw that she was struggling to say what she had come to say.

"Doctor Houston," she said with a rush, "I'm afraid. A life is at stake, and I don't know what to do.

Someone who came to you once said you helped her to understand her problem so she knew what to do. She told me to come to you. It sounds so like nonsense—hysteria—when I put it in words that I'm ashamed to tell it. You believe in faith healing, don't you?"

Doctor Houston smiled. "Yes, I believe most of us need to have our faith healed and strengthened. It's a rather puny, undernourished thing."

She looked startled at this interpretation of her question. But she was beyond smiling at any whimsical turn, so he hastened to reassure her.

"There, I didn't mean to distract you. Go on and tell me your story, and let us see what we can make of it."

With the effect of breathless hurry lest her courage leave her, she rushed into her story.

"A month ago my brother brought his wife home to me—to die. She had fretted so at being in the city. They lived in an apartment. I have our old family home, and she kept remembering the trees and flowers around it. At length Randall wrote and asked if he might bring her here, and of course I said yes. Ellen has a cancer, inoperable. The doctors say she will die very soon. She is worn to a shadow. She can no longer eat. She is in pain all the time, and the nurse keeps her under opiates. It breaks my heart to see her. She is such a splendid person, and there are two small children. Why does God let such torment come upon such a fine person as Ellen?

I can't understand it. It looks as if God doesn't care."

"We'll take that up later. Tell me the rest."

"Yes, that's the strange part. A week ago I was sitting with Ellen at night. It was the nurse's day off, and I take care of her those days. She fell asleep at length, and I leaned back in my chair and tried to speak to God. I told you I am not a good churchwoman. I don't know God. When I try to pray I feel as if I were making impertinent requests of a stranger. What right have I to ask Him for anything?"

"Yes, I know that feeling. When we put our religion away neatly in a box to keep it until we need it, we're likely to find it moth-eaten and out of date when we take it out again."

"I tried to pray, to ask God to spare Ellen that awful pain. Then I began to think that it was silly to pray for her to get better when she couldn't get well. Maybe I ought to pray that she passes out of life quickly. But I didn't dare pray that. I don't see how anyone would dare pray for another to die. So you see, I didn't know what to pray for. I can't tell you how lost, how terrible I felt. It seemed as if Ellen and I were both sinking down in a bog. Then I said, 'God, tell me what I ought to pray for.' Then as plain as though a voice were speaking right in the room came the words 'Pray for healing.'

"Now that was imagination, hysteria, wasn't it? I was tired, grieving over Ellen, troubled because I seemed so far away from God. Such things don't happen. It was imagination, wasn't it?"

"No, I think not," said Doctor Houston.

She stared at him a moment as if expecting him to say more. Then she drew a quick breath and hurried on.

"That isn't all. I sat there trying to reason out what made me think I had heard that voice. I glanced toward the bed. Ellen was awake. She had had a heavy opiate, but she was looking at me so quietly that she seemed like her former self. And she said, 'I seemed to feel the presence of Christ in the room.' I was so frightened and confused that I answered, 'Did you, dear? What did He say?' 'He didn't say anything. He just covered me with love,' said Ellen.

"Now that must have been delirium. Her mind was disordered by the drug. I don't want you to think she is an unbalanced person. Ellen is always so sensible and poised. That was unlike her. I talked to her soothingly. But she looked directly at me and said, 'You don't believe me. But it's true.' Then she turned over and went to sleep. The next morning she seemed better. But you can see how upset I am about the whole thing. What ought I do? What ought I say to Ellen? The nurse, my brother, all our friends are simply waiting for Ellen to die, and then things like that in the night——

"I haven't told anyone. My family would think it ridiculous. I don't know what to do."

"You have missed one opportunity; you don't want to miss another. When the voice said, 'Pray for healing,' you should have begun to pray at once, in

full faith, since you had your direction from God."

"From God? I've wanted so much for Ellen to get well. It must have been something from within."

"Yes, it was from within, and your desire for your sister's healing called it forth. But have you forgotten what it is that speaks deep down within your own being? Surely from your days as a child in Sunday school you recall such sayings as these: 'Ye are a temple of God, and . . . the Spirit of God dwelleth in you' and 'Christ in you, the hope of glory,' and many others, too many for me to repeat. So when that voice spoke to you with authority, it was from within, from the God within. But if you did not obey and pray for healing, you ought to begin now, and I will pray with you."

She looked at him in uncertainty and embarrassment. Evidently she was dreading the thought of praying aloud. But he bowed his head and sat with closed eyes. After a moment she too bowed her head to pray.

After a while she said, "And Ellen—what she said—you wouldn't believe that was real—that Christ was actually in that room?"

"Certainly Christ was in that room, as He is in this, and wherever His brethren, the sons of God, may be. Your boxed-up religion has indeed become musty with disuse if you don't remember that. The first thing you learned about God was that He is omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent. That statement is the great truth that the world is continually

forgetting. Jesus emphasized that truth again and again. His last words spoken to His disciples when He was about to disappear from the eyes of flesh were that Christ would be with them always.

"Yes, Christ was there, and is yet. Nor is it unusual for your sister to have felt His presence so clearly. People who live on a high spiritual plane sometimes feel Christ in their hours of meditation. And the very sick, who are near the point of leaving the body entirely sometimes do. I could tell you stories from my own observation of sick persons who have thus perceived Christ and of the so-called miraculous healings that have followed.

"When you go back tell your sister to remember that Christ is still in the room even if she can no longer 'see' Him and that she is to ask Him for healing. She can do this whether He is seen or unseen. She can ask simply as a child would ask a favor of a loving father. Or she can remember how simply the sick who flocked to Jesus asked for their healings. Thus will she ask. 'Lord, that I may receive my sight,' the blind man prayed. Let her pray, 'Lord, that I may receive my health.' Tell her that you are praying too in the assurance that God's will is always for good toward all His children. And tell her I am praying too. 'In union there is strength' is true of prayer also.

"If there are any others in your family who will pray without reservation, ask them to join us. But we don't want anyone near her who is sure she is

going to die, and do not pray such a prayer as this: 'O Lord, we humbly beseech Thee in Thine infinite mercy to spare our sister if such be Thy will. But if not, Thy will be done.' "

"But ought we not pray, 'Thy will be done?' Why, that is in the Lord's Prayer."

"Certainly we ought to pray that in every prayer. But if we know and love our Father at all we ought to know that His will toward us is always good. What He designs, even if for the moment it looks like disaster, is always good. Say, 'Thy will be done,' and mean it, and then go on in serene confidence. Did Jesus ever turn away anyone that came to Him, saying, 'I think it is God's will that you should continue to suffer'? No, He healed all who came, for He knew that God's will for everyone was health and perfection. Know that for your sister, and help her to hold that faith."

Mrs. Trent arose to go. "I can't tell you how much you have done for me. I do feel that Ellen will get well in spite of her dreadful state, in spite of what the doctors say. I'm going home to tell her these things, and I'm going to tell the rest of the family to stop waiting for her to die. My brother will pray. I don't know about the others, but at least they are not going to handicap her with their thoughts of hopelessness."

* * *

Two weeks later Mrs. Trent again sat in Doctor Houston's study.

"We telephoned you that she is better, but I had to come and speak with you. The doctor says he cannot understand the case. He talks about the spontaneous healing of such tumors; says that it is very rare but does sometimes happen. Of course this is a spontaneous healing, but it came about because we all had faith in Christ's healing power.

"Ellen is eating now and digesting her food. She has gained two pounds in weight. The pain is gone, and she sleeps all night. I just can't describe my brother's happiness. He keeps coming in to look at her as if he can hardly believe it when she is out of his sight. The doubters in the family also have seen her. One of them said that it was only a temporary rally, and I told him he must not come to see Ellen again while he feels that way. He said, 'What does it matter how I feel? I'll not say anything discouraging to her.' Then I tried to explain to him that our thoughts do matter, and that they go out and touch other lives, because we are all bound together through God. I dare say I told it badly, but I did give him something to think about.

"My brother said last night what we are all feeling: 'If Christ is thus present in our lives we can't go on living carelessly as we have done. We've got to do something about this thing we've learned.' We'd like to help in some way to spread this truth. We owe it all to you, Doctor Houston."

"Not to me," he said quickly.

"Oh, I know what you mean. We owe it all to

God. But you showed us the light. We were such strangers to God that we didn't even feel we could speak to Him. You introduced us to Him again. We do owe you a great deal too. We know a little of the work you carry on from this small study, and we want to help. Command us in any way you wish."

"My dear child! Indeed I will. What a real help you will be in carrying this message of hope to others after this experience with one of your own family. And now I wonder if some of your own questions are answered. For instance, 'Does God care about us as individuals and not just in great masses, in terms of the race's destiny?' You have your answer to that."

Mrs. Trent sat in silence for a minute.

"Yes," he said, "I think I can answer that. And when I have hard questions I now know where to go for the answer. I'll not forget again the first lesson about God, that He is omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, and that we, His children, heirs to His glory, even now partake in some measure of all His powers."

Doctor Houston beamed at her. "You're a good student, and have learned your lesson well," he said. "You deserve promotion out of the primary class. You'll never need to be introduced to God again."

CHAPTER VI

Which Way Shall I Turn?

THE CHOIR sang resoundingly and the congregation followed: "Be still, my soul, the Lord is on thy side."

Doctor Houston did not sing, and he noticed that the man next to him seemed to be reading the words with a puzzled frown. Then when the man caught the Doctor's eye, they both smiled.

Outside the church Alson said, "We had a fine sermon, and there is a good choir. It's too bad they sing uninspiring old hymns."

"Did you too find that hymn uninspiring? Do you mind telling me why you do not like it?" said Doctor Houston.

"It strikes me we're all wrong if we expect the Lord to be on our side. I recall an old story about President Lincoln. When during the War of the States a deputation of Southerners said that they hoped the Lord was on their side, the President said, 'It is more important to know that we are on God's side."

"A real distinction there," said the Doctor. "To me it seems impertinent and ridiculous to ask the Lord to be on our side. In a thousand strifes and wars those on each side are praying for the Lord to be with them even though they are struggling and praying for opposite things. That's one thing that

is wrong with some of our praying: We try to cajole or bribe the Eternal to take sides in His world and among His children."

"I've a confession to make. I'm not much on praying; but lately I've been appealing to a power higher than I, and I guess I was asking the Lord to be on my side. It shocked me to see the words in the hymnbook this morning. But they leave me adrift. I've heard about what you're doing Doctor. A man I know told me you gave him the word that helped him get out of a bog. I wonder if you'd let me call some day to talk things over with you."

"No time like the present. Come in and have dinner with me."

"That's kind of you. I'd like to have that talk."

Both men were so interested that there was scarcely a pause when they were seated at the table.

"We are adrift on the matter of prayer," said Doctor Houston. "Sometimes a visitor says to me, 'I've prayed and prayed, and nothing happens.' Then perhaps I say, 'How have you prayed? For God to lead you or for you to lead God?' That sounds so shocking that the inquirer takes a look at the petitions he has been making. We so often pray in order to coax or compel God. But what does it avail to travel long and far if we are on the wrong road? Try to imagine what would happen to this world if all the Christians now would pray the Lord's Prayer and mean it: 'Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth.' His will in our life so that we may make

no more wasted effort. We have made such a muddle of prayer, and it is so simple.

" 'Our Father.' All of us together praying to the Father of all men, good and bad. No separate selfish petitions but every man's prayer blending with all other prayers for the common good. 'Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done.' When? Not in some distant future in some far-off heaven, but here and now in the lives of common men on earth. 'Give us this day our daily bread.' Food for body and mind and spirit. All that we need to nourish ourselves richly so that we may stand up and express ourselves as sons of God.

"And 'forgive . . . as we have forgiven.' The law of the harvest, the law that says: 'Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.' And 'With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured unto you.' And 'Deliver us from evil.' Why, all the prayers we can ever make for help and wisdom and guidance are in that phrase: Deliver us from sin and error, from sickness and death, from poverty of spirit or lack in the material world, from hate and fear, in short, from all evil. Do we need any more prayer? I can't think we do if we ever learn to comprehend this.

"How simple it is! There is no beating of the breast or sobbing out of complaints and confessions. There is no emotional intensity of a cry for some boon only half expected. A man stands up before his Father, asks forgiveness for his sins, speaks his

words of adoration, and simply states his needs. And he doesn't recite those needs because he thinks God needs to be reminded but because he himself needs to be reminded that he lives and moves and has his being in the Eternal, and that all good and only good comes from God's hand.

"You can see then that I cannot join wholeheartedly in singing, 'Be still my soul, the Lord is on thy side.' I have a higher opinion of the Eternal. But I pray that I may have wisdom to find out His way and to walk in it. That may seem like quibbling. But behind the sentiment of that line lies a great mass of false teaching and futile praying upon which the church has wasted time that should have been used to forward the kingdom."

"I'm beginning to see what you mean," said Alson, "but it still leaves me puzzled. I'm one of those who decided what he thought he ought to do, and then I prayed God to help me do it. And now maybe I'm wrong. But how can I know? Isn't a man supposed to use his mind to decide what he ought to do with his life?"

"Certainly he is. What do you think God gave us our mind for? We have powers to plan and judge and decide. Don't forget that we are sons of God. We have our portion of that same mind which was also in Christ Jesus. Also do not forget that in a crisis He said, 'Nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done.' And He said this is no weak spirit of resignation to inevitable evil, but in wholehearted

acquiescence in God's plan. He was not done to death by his foes; He laid down His life of His own accord. He specifically said so.

"Now when we say, 'Thy will be done,' it doesn't mean that we give up our plans grudgingly, saying in effect, 'Well, Lord, since I can't get out of it I suppose I'll have to let Your will be done.' It doesn't mean to let go of the oars and drift on with the noise of the rapids in your ears. To say, 'Thy will be done' means to go into partnership with the All-Highest, and henceforth you have a right to call upon all the wisdom and power of God to help you."

"But how shall I know whether I am in accord with that will, whether I am in the divine partnership? Suppose I've been rushing down the wrong road."

"There are road signs."

"I can't read them. I told you I've not been a religious man. But I'd like to get this set right. What shall I do?"

"Well, what would you suggest? Suppose there were not a person in the world with whom you could talk it over. How would you find out? You can't believe that your Father would leave you in ignorance on such an important matter." Doctor Houston was smiling as he put this question up to the man who had no religion.

Alson stared at him.

"'Do you mean that God would tell me what to

do? Well, I can't believe that. Oh, I know there are people who claim to have guidance, but I cannot believe that any supernatural sign appears, or any voice from another world whispers in our ears. We've got to get out of our muddles by using the means we have here on earth."

"Probably no pillar of cloud or fire will appear to guide you and no ghostly voice will whisper in your ear. Yet I maintain we may have guidance directly from God. It will not be by supernatural means. There are no supernatural means. The universe is law-abiding. What man has called supernatural in the past was merely something that he could not understand. As we find out how things work, the mystery is gone. Witness steam and electricity, the telephone, the radio, the airplane, to mention but a few of the wonders of our age.

"But according to law, and by means at hand right here on earth God does speak to the man who waits for His voice. God does tell him what to do, what road to take, what plans to lay out. Do not say it cannot happen before you have given it a trial. Why, God is always trying to get through to us with His wisdom for guidance. You remember how Isaiah visioned it: 'And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it.' Cease resisting and doubting, and give it a trial before you say it cannot happen."

"You really believe I can find out whether I am on the right road or not?"

"I know it. God will guide you if you give Him a chance. Haven't you ever heard a salesman say: 'I had a hunch that I ought to go and see that man. I didn't, and I lost a big sale.' The hunch is the name the man in the street gives to that inner voice which is always trying to speak to us.

"Surely you don't think God would be so unreasonable as to put us here in life amid so much confusion and not give us sure guidance? Have you forgotten that God is your Father, that He cares about you, that He wants you to do your work in the world well and successfully?"

"That sounds very well when you say it, Doctor Houston, but when I try to pray I think of the supreme Mind in the universe, the Mind that swings the unimaginable multitude of stars in their orbits. I remember that I am one mote among billions here on one of the smaller planets, and it is too much for me to believe that God will pay any attention to me."

"If that's the only kind of God you can vision it is rather hopeless. You not only picture Him with an infinite job; but you feel that He has a finite mind, simply rushed to the limit with all the things He has to do. No, that kind of God couldn't pay any attention to one of these 'motes' on this inconsiderable planet. If He consciously made them at all He had to give them a shove and start them on their way and hope for the best. But again, do you think a Father would treat His children that way?

"Do you know the Holy Spirit?"

"I haven't the faintest idea what you mean. Of course I've heard that phrase all my life. And I sang with the others this morning, 'Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.' But I don't know what it is."

"Probably another of those strangers in your house of life waiting for your recognition. I'm going to try to express it so simply that even a child can understand. I don't know how this would stand up with theological definitions, but to me the Holy Spirit is my share of God and His love. And your Holy Spirit is your share. I do not mean of course to imply that God, the infinite, is divided. He isn't divided any more than a father is divided when he loves and directs a dozen children in his home.

"The only way I can bring it home to people who have never thought of it is to say, 'You have a share of God.' And that means that you have a share of all of God's wisdom, power, abundance, life. And this God is not away off in a heaven beyond the farthest star. He is here with you, even in your heart, caring about you, working for you, yearning over you, longing to give you more of Himself. Now do you see how you can be sure God hears you when you ask Him to guide you in the small affairs of your life?"

"It is a rather awesome thought!"

"Yes, it does make one stop and consider. Here we have what is necessary to make our life effective, and we get it into such a muddle. The Psalmist, con-

sidering similar problems for his people, said, 'He led them forth by the right way.' He does it for nations and for individuals if only they will call upon Him. That is all you want, to be led in the right way."

"Doctor Houston, I'm going to try it," said Alson, his voice trembling with feeling. "Will you pray with me?"

"Yes, now." He closed his eyes, and after a moment said: "Father-God, Your children are waiting before You for direction. We don't want to take any wrong steps. May Your will be done in us. And hush our spirits now and shut out all the voices of time and sense so that we may hear clearly, and then give us the resolution to follow."

For minutes there was silence in the room. A bird's song outside sounded piercingly clear. Then Alson moved.

"I'm going to do it," he said. "It's something I never thought of before, and it doesn't seem very reasonable. But I'm going to try it."

He arose. "Doctor Houston, a person can't exactly thank a man for conducting him into God's antechamber. But if this turns out right you will have the satisfaction of knowing that you've saved a man—two men—and a business, with all the people who are depending on it."

"Not I," said Doctor Houston.

"No? I see what you mean. But you've had a mighty big share in it."

* * *

Doctor Houston did not see Alson again for six months. Then he met him at a civic banquet. He knew before this meeting however that the tottering business had not collapsed but was now on a good footing. Across the crowded room Alson made his way to the Doctor's side.

"It worked," he said simply.

"Of course."

"It was so simple. I took in a man that I'd never thought of before that minute. He was just what I needed. We've pulled out of the hole, and we're on our way.

"Doctor Houston, I don't want to be sentimental or imaginative about this thing. I'm going to tell you something I've never told a soul. I'm not sure it's real. When we sat quiet after you prayed I seemed to see that man's name before my closed eyes. Of course I just imagined it."

"Of course," said Doctor Houston with twinkling eyes. "Man, be sure you hang onto your realistic attitude. Even the pessimistic Hamlet thought there might be more things in heaven and earth than were dreamt of in his philosophy. Be sure of the reality of all that happens to you. Only don't forget that God is a realist too."

Chapter VII

The Way Out of Failure

When he entered his study Doctor Houston knew that his visitor had not returned to report success in finding the divine way out of his difficulties; he had come to report complete and tragic failure. He was as far from the light as a man could be. Baffled resentment and despair looked out of his suffering eyes. Doctor Houston sympathized with the man. In his work he met a good many failures. That was one price he had to pay as a teacher of old truths made new. The failures needed to begin at the very beginning, like kindergarten children, and some of them were unwilling to go back. They thought they were ready for a master's degree.

"Good morning, Andrew," said the Doctor.

"Good morning, Doctor," Then hardly waiting until they were seated he burst forth:

"Well it didn't work, Doctor. Your prayers for me didn't do any good. I did what you said. I prayed and prayed with all my might. I tried to have faith. But nothing happened. I'm still suffering from that torturing disease that will at length take my life. I don't know where to turn for money. My home is a small edition of hell. My friends have deserted me.

"I don't believe in the kind of God you talked about. There is no loving Father. Instead there is a

great impersonal Mind that gives the worlds a shove and then lets them go. I'm just one of the specimens in the laboratory. Fate is carving me up. I don't know what it will prove. Probably many other poor devils are carved up without proving anything but man's capacity to suffer. I'm sick of this idea of reaching God and getting a miraculous healing. It was just another deception to torment me. They say that some people come to you and you heal them——"

"No," said Doctor Houston so firmly that the furious flow of words was interrupted. "I'm going to listen to all you have to say, and then we will see if we can find a glimpse of light together. But I cannot let you go on with that false assumption. I do not heal anyone. I am not a physician, nor a miracle worker. I'm a teacher. I've helped some people to find their own way into the assurances of God's love. *Their own way,* Andrew. That's the only way to come into it."

"Now, Doctor Houston, you're talking that nonsense again about wrong thinking. You're trying to tell me it's my own fault. That's what all these people do that pretend to teach you some wonderful new doctrine. They are so cold, so uncaring. They give you a bit of abstract teaching way over the heads of ordinary people. They tell you that you can contact God and receive healing. You come back and say you are still suffering, and they tell you your thinking is wrong, and then they wash their

hands of you. They put you on your own.

"That isn't what Jesus did, assuming for the sake of argument that the New Testament story is true. When people were hungry Jesus didn't put them off to do some lofty thinking. He fed them. When they were suffering He cured them. He didn't tell them to get on a higher plane and contact God. Common people like me came to Him with their troubles, and He helped them all. He didn't put them off until they could think right."

Andrew bowed his head upon his hands, and the Doctor's heart went out to this troubled man.

"Now, Andrew, I've listened to you. Will you listen to me?"

"Of course," said Andrew. "I know you're not hard and cold. You'd help me if you could. It's just that we're all caught in this iron net of fate."

"No, Andrew, I mean really listen, not just with your ears but with an open mind. And forget this iron net for a while. You may be surprised to find that it is really made of gossamer."

"I'll listen with an open mind," said Andrew.

"I'm going to try to point out at least the next step of the way from your own testimony," Doctor Houston continued. "You are doubtless sincere in your feeling that many teachers are cold and careless, apparently regarding you as just another laboratory specimen. To you they probably seem to pride themselves on being impersonal. Perhaps you feel that in their abstractions they get too far away from

the suffering heart of humanity. But while you live in the flesh you like the touch of a warm human hand upon yours. You are right in saying that Jesus lived with the people's difficulties and sorrows and joys. He dealt with common people like you and me, and that is one of our greatest inspirations for hope today. He fed the hungry multitudes, He healed the sick, and He brought joy to the sorrowing. So far we agree. But now I am going to ask you to come with me along another road.

"Five thousand hungry people sat on a hillside, and Jesus fed them. He didn't ask whether they were spiritual-minded. He gave them food they could see and eat. What did He do the next day? What happened to those people the next day?"

"Why—why, they must have been hungry again," said Andrew.

"Of course they were hungry again. But Jesus didn't tell them just to sit down on the hillside again and be fed. That wasn't what He came to do. If He had gone about feeding the hungry of Judea all His days, we might read a line about Him in history, and that would be all. What He wanted to do was to teach these people and us how to get our own bread from heaven without needing to call upon anyone else. He was continually telling men how to do that very thing. But the men were like us. They were so blinded by doubt and fear and ignorance that they could not see the light that He offered.

"Knowing the story of Jesus, we feel sure that He would have liked to lift all those five thousand up to the spiritual plane where they could draw whatever they needed directly from God. He could not do it. With all His divine power He could not. He could teach men how to reach it, and He did. He could show them the way. But only when they turned their own will toward the spiritual way could they go with Him to that place of power.

"And what became of the people who were healed? Well, at least some of them got sick again, and some of them probably got sick very soon. Why? Jesus told them why. He said, 'Sin no more, lest a worse thing befall thee.' Don't you see what He meant? He wasn't saying to the healed person, 'Now don't go out and rob your neighbor, else God will send paralysis upon you as a punishment.' He meant something far more direct than that. He meant that the disease was the result of wrong thought—sin—and that unless the healed person set his inner world right he would again produce the result of sickness in his body.

"But Jesus was always telling men how to live in the world so that they would be insulated from these disasters. You don't do this, He said in effect, by calling upon some far-off capricious God who might hear your begging and relent. No, He taught that the kingdom of heaven is within you and that you may dwell in that kingdom now.

"He wanted all men to come to live with God

as closely as He Himself did. He couldn't do that for them; He could only show them the way. He said, 'And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto myself.' But He will draw them, not coerce them. You are ridiculing the idea of a spiritual place where the so-called miracles become possible. Jesus spent His life teaching common men that there was such a spiritual kingdom and that even the least of them could dwell in it. The food from heaven and the healings were only samples of what a man could expect when he entered that heavenly kingdom. If you will not enter, no outside help can go very far.

"You think there is just a vast Mind that cares nothing about you. That is a paralyzing belief. It seems to me that the most important of all the things Jesus came to teach is that God is love. Before that men thought God was power, vengeance, perhaps cold justice. Some of the seers had had glimpses of another kind of God, one who was like a father that pitied His children. But Christ, who was really acquainted with God, taught that He is a loving Father, and John in his first epistle says without qualification, 'God is love.' If we accept and believe that declaration we change all our reactions toward God.

"Jesus made the love of God humanly understandable when He taught us to say, 'Our Father,' and when He told us that God is not far off but near at hand. If He loves us His hands of bounty are

already outstretched toward us. We do not have to beg and plead. A human father doesn't give his child a stone when he asks for bread. He gives the child bread and adds butter and jam for good measure. Andrew, can you get that? God is love. Can you act for a while as if it were true? If you can you will get some results. You'll not come back to me to say that you are still sick and that your home is a hell.

"And another important thing Jesus said is 'If any man willeth to do his will [God's will], he shall know of the teaching, whether it is of God, or *whether* I speak from myself.' There it is. You don't have to go by guesswork or mere hope. You can know whether this doctrine in which you are asked to trust is really true. But if you are going to find out the truth you must act on it. You must assume that it is true, then go ahead and act until it proves itself.

"The trouble with many of us is that we sit down and wallow in our misery. We say we think, if you can call it thinking when we merely turn our doubts this way and that. People come to me and say, 'I've prayed and prayed, and nothing changes.' How have they prayed? They have been begging a careless or an offended God to change His mind. I try to make them see that what needs changing is themselves. Prayer or meditation that has no result but more prayer and meditation is barren. That wasn't Jesus' way. He spent hours of the night in prayer, and then

He spent days among the needy working out His prayers. That is what we must do, make our prayers flow out into visible forms, into health, harmonious relations with others, abundance, peace, a helping hand, a lift to everyone about us.

"Andrew, you've got to come up a step if you are to get any help. The God that helps you is here, ready to help. But you must grow in consciousness to a point where you can see Him. That degree of development is not a figment of the imagination or something to be perceived only by the devout mystic. It is real, and even the simplest of men can reach it. If I should tell you to go and climb a mountain somewhere as the price of your freedom, you would go, no matter how steep and rough the mountain, you would get to the top. Now I am asking you to climb. You say you cannot see this height to which I try to point you. It may be veiled in mist just now, but it is there. Thousands have reached it. It is real, as real as love and truth and honor. You never called love unreal because you couldn't touch it with physical hands. Now I ask you for just a little time to test out whether this is real. Act as if it were and try it."

Andrew sat for a moment trying to take in these thoughts which came to his tormented mind with the force of a new revelation. Then he said, "What do you want me to do? Tell me in plain words."

"What do I want you to do? It is not what I want, Andrew. You must understand that you are

not to lean on another person. What you should be asking is 'What does God want me to do?' And I can't answer that for you. You will have to ask God. We're going to ask Him in a minute. But first I want to tell you a few things I have learned.

"When I say that you must do something about your faith, that doesn't mean you are to rush out headlong into any endeavor. We leave the direction of all activity with God. But we wait before Him with mind open, ready to catch the first stirring of the inner voice. Paul sometimes used the metaphor of a soldier to illustrate the Christian attitude toward life. So let us use it here. A good soldier does not rush out madly by himself to overcome an enemy. If he did he would be killed or captured and of no further use as a soldier. He waits for the commander to tell him what to do. But when the command does come he does not hesitate, no matter how difficult or dangerous the work. Now that is what I think you might do. Wait before God. Tell Him that you are resting on His promises, that you are waiting for His word to do whatever you should toward bringing them into sight. Are you ready now?"

"Yes," said Andrew hesitantly.

Doctor Houston bowed his head, but said nothing aloud. In a moment Andrew followed his example, and prayed a new prayer. Then they both sat silent.

"I think," said Andrew slowly, "that the first thing I ought to do is to try to set things right at home."

"That sounds reasonable to me. And it ought not be too hard."

"It will be plenty hard. I think my wife and I hate each other, and the children avoid my presence. I don't know whose fault it is——"

"Assume that it's all yours," smiled the Doctor.

"All right, I will," said Andrew after a moment.

"Remember now, you're taking healing for all your ills with you to be drawn upon as you go. When you have put love in the place of hate in your home you might ask all the family to join you in prayer for healing. And you know my prayers will be joined to yours."

"Thank you, Doctor. If I should see any light I'll come back and tell you."

* * *

It was six months before Andrew came back. Doctor Houston had heard about him but had had no conversation with him in that time.

The Doctor smiled quizzically when he met the firm handclasp of a man whose eyes now looked confident.

"It's all been so simple, Doctor. There was no terrific upheaval, which I think I half expected at first. I just went on from one step to another. First the family. I talked with my wife alone. I told her our trouble was all my fault but that I was going to try. She threw her arms around me and cried out that it was her fault. She was sorry she had failed me, and now she would stand by. For a while we

just clung together and felt the old love flowing back. And after we had become calm I called the children in, and I told them too I knew I hadn't been a good father, but now couldn't we all try together to make a real home. I thought they were hard and flippant youngsters, but—well, I learned something there too. I almost forgot about the physical handicaps in the uplift of that reunion with my family.

"No, I wasn't miraculously healed next morning, but from that day on all the bad symptoms lessened. I didn't think about them. And when I did remember after a while to check up I found they were gone. I've started in business again. It's still tough going, for my place was filled when I dropped out. But I'm making a living, and I can see a little progress all the time. During vacation my oldest boy came into the office with me, and he did a lot of detail work for me. We're both looking forward to the time when he'll be a partner.

"I don't know whether I've got up on a higher plane, but at least I'm realizing a more satisfactory life for my family and myself. Your plan works: I take time every day to wait for God's direction, and then I do the thing that seems next. Sometimes it's a simple little thing that I'd have scorned in the old days. Then sometimes the simple thing leads to big results.

"I'm not telling you that everything has become easy. It's hard, most of it, but it all gives me a

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feeling of satisfaction. You know how putting over a hard job peps you up. Well, that's the way I feel when I've conquered another difficulty. So I'm going to keep on doing this job God gave me the very best way I can."

"Man, you may not yet have arrived, but you know which way to go," said Doctor Houston.

Chapter VIII

Will the Door Open?

"I'VE BEEN praying for fifteen years about this one thing that I wish to see come to pass in my life. I'm up against a stone wall. I've heard about ways through or over stone walls, but in my case not a thing has happened in all these years. I'm just where I was when I started. There is no encouragement to think things will ever change. There is no door in my stone wall, and no way over it. I can beat against it till I die."

"Have you been standing in exactly the same place before the wall for all these years?" asked Doctor Houston.

"Why, yes, I think I have," said Eleanor Hart, a little startled by this queer question. She had talked over her problem with other spiritual advisers. Some had commiserated her and recommended that she look for the fulfillment of her desire in heaven. Others had suggested various remedies: more prayer, more faith, more concentration. But no one before had ever asked if she had been standing still.

"Well, then," said Doctor Houston, "I should say that there isn't any door at that place in the wall, and you ought to move along the wall until you find the door."

"Do you mean I'm to give up the great objective of my life?"

"Certainly not. But I am suggesting that you stop and analyze your method of trying to reach it. Suppose you are going to a party on the other side of town. You find Maple Street blocked off for repairs. Do you stay in your car at the head of Maple Street and hope and pray they may finish the paving before you starve to death or do you give up the party entirely and go home?"

"I do neither; I go on to Oak Street, which is clear, and cross on it to the other side of town."

"Exactly. Why do you not apply a similar method to the problem of reaching your objective in life?"

She sat silent for a minute and then said: "I never thought of it that way. But you still do not understand my particular problem, Doctor Houston. If I leave this I give up the thing I have thought I ought to do—oh, ever since I was a child of nine or ten. And I've always been taught that persistence and concentration are necessary to any sort of success. Do you advise me now to veer about, slipping from one thing to another if I find it is difficult to reach my objective? Why, even the Scriptures warn us against such instability and changefulness. 'Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel.' Isn't that what the patriarch said about Reuben? And James says: 'Let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think he shall receive any thing of the Lord.' Now I have been trying to obey these directions, to avoid instability,

to concentrate all my powers on this one point. I cannot think I ought to waver and change."

Doctor Houston smiled understandingly.

"You are quite right. No, I do not advise you to give up your objective, only to change the direction by which you approach it. Think of our illustration again. When you come to the detour sign you do not give up and go home, nor do you decide that perhaps you had better go to Chicago instead of Saint Louis, because the road to Chicago seems clear while that to Saint Louis has a detour sign on it. You simply go round by the other road. Sometimes it's longer, but often it is very interesting. You come to the end of the detour enriched by your experiences. I have often found this to be true."

"But still I say you do not understand my problem. If I give up my ambition, and do some other thing as you suggest, I shall never come back. It is a little different with me than with people in other pursuits. You see, I feel called upon to express myself through music. I've had a thorough musical education. I cannot sing in concert or opera; my voice is not strong enough for that. But as I studied I found that I could compose. I wanted to write songs that might express beautiful harmony. I devoted myself to the simpler forms of music, music that might give pleasure and inspiration to the multitudes. While I was a student I thought that might be my career. My teachers encouraged me. Doctor Houston, I'm sure I've written some really beautiful

songs, and competent musicians have told me they are beautiful.

"But do you know that it is next to impossible to interest the music publishers in my work. An unknown outsider like me has about as much chance of getting it accepted for publication as I would have of walking unannounced into Buckingham Palace for a chat with the king and queen."

"I have heard that."

"I cannot find a publisher who is willing to publish and sufficiently advertise even one of my songs. They all say it would not pay, because my name means nothing to the public. And that is true. I cannot get any prominent singer to introduce one of my songs. Again I am quite unknown. Some of them have said if I'd write a 'popular' song I might have a chance. But 'popular' song writing is an art in itself, and I have never felt that I had any ability in that direction. Of course I could publish a song myself if I could afford that. I cannot.

"So now do you see why I say I've been standing at this one place before a stone wall, beating against it but finding no sign of a door that will open? And do you also see why I say if I give this up I shall never write songs? In spite of everything I feel this is what I ought to do. Does God give us a talent, and then leave us no outlet for it except to bury it? I don't want to be an unprofitable servant. I want to express what I think He has given me."

"By all means. But only God knows just how you

are going to do that. I can give you only a few general ideas about how to find the door. One thing I do know: God did not give you your talent to be buried. I'm sure He never does that. He wants you to use it to His glory and for your own happiness and abundant life. And I'm sure too that He will show you how if you leave it up to Him. Can you 'rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him'?"

"In some circumstances I could, though I thought you advised me not to wait any longer but to move on. And anyway, there is no question of waiting any longer. I need a job. I've got to support myself and help a little at home."

"I didn't tell you that you were not to wait on the Lord. I believe in always doing that. But don't stand around worrying while you wait. You can wait much better if you keep busy at some useful work. You remember I suggested that you were not to stand in one spot beating against a stone wall in which there was no opening. Take a detour. You can wait for the Lord while you're doing that. Your need of a job is probably the best thing that could happen to you."

"I confess I don't see any best about it. I got my education on the modest income from a legacy left me by my paternal grandmother. I don't know just how assets become 'frozen,' though our family lawyer has tried to explain it to me. That's what happened to the stock Grandmother left me, and the dividends are cut in half. Mother has the home, but

her income too is almost at the vanishing point. My young half sister is growing up and must be educated. So you see I can't wait any longer for my dream to come true of giving the world songs that carry on the traditions of exalted music."

"Once more, Miss Hart, I say don't give it up. Just wait. And while you wait work faithfully at whatever comes to hand. Your talent is not to be tossed aside as waste. Sometime, somewhere, God will tell you how He wants you to use it for Him.

"In the meantime you need a job. And it happens that just today I have been asked to suggest someone for a vacancy. They need a teacher at the orphanage out on Regent Road. The board wants someone who will teach the children 'practical, working religion,' as they phrase it, something like what I teach here in this study. I believe you know enough of it to guide these children who are in such need of love and guidance. Will you try it? The salary is not large, but it will be in addition to what you have, and you will have free time to carry on your work."

For a minute Eleanor hesitated and considered. She would never have chosen teaching for a fill-in job. She thought she would hate to teach. Yet here was the job offered at the time she needed one. If a hand was being reached out to lead her along a strange path to her objective, surely she must not miss the chance by refusing to take the hand because she did not like the looks of the bypath ahead.

"I'll take it," she said, "if they will take me."

"Fine," said Doctor Houston. "Now we will both wait to see what the next step will be."

The orphanage board accepted Eleanor Hart for the vacant post. Doctor Houston later learned that she fitted into the work of the home as if she had been made for it and that the children adored her. Then with the many matters that pressed for his attention he dismissed Eleanor from his mind until he should hear from her again.

* * *

A year later she made another visit to the study.

"A wonderful thing has happened," she said. "You are not surprised; you knew something would happen. But I was such a doubter that I am living in a state of astonishment. I can hardly believe yet that it has happened.

"In the spring we decided to have the children give a play for the last day of school. I wrote the play, fitting it to the abilities of the children, and weaving it around half a dozen of my children's songs. I expected nothing but that the children would enjoy giving the play, and the people interested in the home would enjoy seeing it. The children did it very well indeed. Members of the board came up to praise it after it was done. And one board member had a guest from the city. She is interested in producing good plays for children. You have heard of her. She has already had a notable success with her plays. She has asked me to enlarge my play,

and keep my songs in it. Also I am to write songs for two other plays now in rehearsal. I am to go to the city next month, with all expenses paid, and help to direct the putting on of my play for a trial performance.

"The director has warned me that there won't be much money in it at first, but she thinks there is a real place for me. She called my songs the most charming children's songs she had ever heard.

"But don't you see what it means? I'm to get my songs before the public, and if they are worth anything I shall find out. If the children begin to hum and whistle them I shall know the door in the wall is beginning to open. You were right about moving along, and trying from another direction. I didn't know I was a playwright at all, but people are praising my little play. It's going to carry my songs out where people can hear them. I shall not desert my dear children at the orphanage. I'm coming back to them in September. And the board has voted that I may have time off when I need to go to the city to help put on a production.

"I don't know how to thank you, not only for this open door but for what I've learned about life from you. Never again will I stand in one place and wail that the door won't open despite all my prayers. I'll move on and try another place."

Doctor Houston offered his congratulations and good wishes. He had not a doubt that this new venture would lead to a notable success for Eleanor

Hart. It was so plainly marked out for her.

"Wait on the Lord," he smiled, "but keep working while you wait."

Chapter IX

That Which I Gave

The woman's face had been ravaged by long-held sorrow. She turned her tragic eyes in reproach at Doctor Houston's cheerful greeting.

"I don't think anyone can do anything for me," she said. "But a friend told me to come and talk with you."

"Sometimes wisdom emerges as we talk things over," said Doctor Houston. "Usually matters can be made better if we stand off from our troubles long enough to get a perspective."

He knew about Mrs. Ravell. He knew what her problem was.

"Tell me about it if you wish. If you'd rather not tell me, then just tell God and we'll pray together."

"I've told God. I've prayed and prayed for things to be set right, and nothing has happened," she said passionately.

"Did you pray for things to be set right or to be set the way you wanted them?" he asked gently.

"Why!" She paused, startled at the question. "But my way is right. I am just asking for what is the right of every mother."

"Ah, well, mothers have more valuable things than rights. Go on."

"I have three sons. One of them goes to your church. I think you know Frank Ravell. There aren't

any finer boys anywhere. All of them are clever, honorable, good-looking, healthy, charming. I was left a widow when they were small. My husband left me an income, but it had to be managed carefully to provide for the boys' education. I have given up my whole life for them. I sacrificed, never considered myself, did without things I wanted, just so the boys could have a chance. I wore shabby clothes so that they could have good clothes. I gave up my own pleasures so that they could have some pocket money when they were in college. I gave up much of my social life so that they could have a better chance. I did everything, everything a mother could do. I never thought of myself." Her voice was growing hysterical.

"All this of course was a great hardship to you? You hated to sacrifice yourself thus?" Doctor Houston interposed.

"Why, no. Certainly not. I wanted to do it. I love my children. I would do anything for them."

"I just wanted to be sure I understood. You were doing then the things that above all else you wanted to do. The things that gave you joy. You have no regrets. You wouldn't change anything. Your sorrow is not because of what you have done for your children. What is it then?"

She hesitated. She looked strange, as if she were seeing things she never had seen before. Then she plunged on, hurrying to get the story told.

"Each one of my sons got his education in the

line he had chosen. Each started out for himself, and worked into a good position. And then one after another they married."

The final words were said with an air of tragedy.

"You expected that. You had probably prepared them to be good husbands. You wanted to see them establish happy homes."

"Y-yes. I expected them to marry sometime. But they might have waited a little longer and have given me a little more."

"A little more what? Money?"

"Oh, no! I have more than enough for my needs, thank God. I used to stretch the income for four, but now I have only myself. I don't need to ask them for anything. But they might have given me a little more of their companionship after all I had done for them."

"But you can still have their companionship, can't you?"

"That's just what I cannot have. They are married, and there is no place for me in their lives. Sometimes I think they do not love me at all. They just tolerate me because I am their mother. Isn't a mother entitled to something more than that? Their wives fill their lives. They make it plain that I am in the way.

"My youngest son married about six months ago. Up to that time I kept my own home. When he left I could see no reason for keeping up a home. I rented the house furnished and went to live with

Frank, my eldest son. His wife was very friendly about my coming, and said I would be welcome to make my home with them.

"Understand, they did not have to support me. I contributed generously to the expenses of the household. I bought many little extras that they couldn't have afforded. I stayed with the babies afternoons or evenings when Laura wanted to go out. I more than did my share, but after a while I could see that Laura was not so friendly. Naturally I resented it and told her so. She said she didn't like my meddling. Meddling! Imagine that when I had only tried to set things right for her and Frank. In the end Frank took sides against me and said he thought it would be better if I took an apartment by myself somewhere.

"I don't want to be by myself. I hate being alone. So I went to Alton, my second son. I never did like his wife very well. He married against my advice. She's a wasteful and careless housekeeper. She'll keep Alton poor if she doesn't get some sense. I could have helped her in so many ways. But I hadn't been there a month until I saw that I couldn't stay. She made it more than plain that she didn't want me.

So I went to Curt. I was heartsick by this time, and more so when I saw that he was reluctant to have me come. It's no use telling you all that happened. Patty, his wife, had never kept house before she was married. She didn't know anything about taking care of a home. I thought I could be such a help to her. Yet she resented any advice I gave her.

After a while Curt told me the same thing Frank had told me, that it would be better for all of us if I took an apartment by myself.

"So you can see why I said I didn't think you could do anything for me. You see me now a mother cast off by her children, even denied any leftover crumbs of affection. I know how King Lear felt.

" 'How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is
To have a thankless child.' "

Doctor Houston reflected for a moment: "Yes, I believe you know how King Lear felt, for you are taking the same slant on parenthood that he took. King Lear is our classic symbol of an unloved father, brought low by the ingratitude of unnatural children. And many a parent since, wounded in his self-love, has likened himself to that tragic old king."

She sat up straighter in her chair, indignation beginning to burn in her eyes. For this was not the language of sympathy. Self-love, indeed, when she had given all for love of her children! They had told her that Doctor Houston would speak plainly. He was doing more than that. He was putting his finger on the sorest spot in her soul.

"Mrs. Ravell, I ask you to look again at King Lear. Whence did his troubles come? From his attempt to bargain in love: 'I will give you so much and in return you will pay me so much.' He gave, and his daughters failed to carry out their share of the bargain. Love does not work that way. Love never bargains. Love pours out without thought of

return because it is love. It cannot do otherwise.

"When you told me how much you had done for your children I asked you if it had been a hardship, and you said no, it had been a joy. So far you were right. But now you are wrong. You gave your love, a joyful gift, but now you are asking your children to repay you in the heavy coin of duty. How can you so belittle love? How can you ask them to pay you back? How can you accept from them anything except love that is given freely? When duty comes between parent and child all the beauty and holiness is gone out of the relation. Did you care for them because it was your duty to do it? What a heavy, grudging task that would have been. Yet you expect them to perform their duty to you."

Her eyes had filled with tears at Doctor Houston's stern words.

"But—but surely you don't expect me to give up my children!"

"That is exactly what you must do if you want to find peace. Give them up, release them from all your claims. That is what every good parent must do. That is the object of all our training of our children. We are teaching them to stand alone, independent of us. And when they are strong enough to do that we must release them, body and mind, and let them go their own way with no interference from us.

"And now that we have looked upon the high plane of selfless love let us come back and consider

what may be done to set your own life in order and make it happy and useful again.

"No parent has a right to lean upon his children and to cease to live except in their reflected lives. You are a separate, independent person, neither a background nor a directing force for your children's lives. Live your own life.

"You made a mistake when you gave up your house. You should have kept your own home. And now you must make a home for yourself again as quickly as you can. In your own home you were the arbiter. In another woman's home you were as useless as a fifth wheel and probably as much in the way.

"From what you yourself have said I gather that you tried to teach each of your daughters how to run her home. May I give you one golden maxim for parents of grown-up children? It is this: Never offer advice even when you see that it is greatly needed. Resist the temptation until it flees from you. Keep silent in the presence of their mistakes if you have to bite your tongue to stem the words. Wait until you are asked for advice and then give it reluctantly, so that they have to draw it from you. They will value it the more as something that is hard to get.

"You are lonely now. You will be less lonely when you become yourself instead of being merely your sons' mother. Make a home again. Invite them to visit you. When they come be a happy, gracious hostess, not an aggrieved mother. Forget all that is

past. Start anew on friendly but casual terms with all your children. Then you will have companionship with them, and this time it will be a real tie, without the heavy sense of duty. You thanked God that you have enough money to live on with dignity. Thank Him again every day of your life. It makes your problem simple to solve. If financial necessity forced you to live with your children, you'd have harder adjustments to make.

"And do not rely wholly on your children for companionship. Make contacts with people who have interests similar to yours. Then you will have a happier social life. When you really don't care whether you see the children this week or next, you will be a wiser, happier, better woman. So much for relationships with your children; but you are not done when that is settled.

"You want to make your own life complete again. A woman who has successfully reared a family has gathered so much wisdom and understanding that she must not sit back in the shadows and let these precious gifts slip from her slack hands. Yet when the children take flight, many women who have been well-nigh perfect mothers lean back and say, 'My work is done.' Your work is not done; it is really beginning. You trained the children God gave you, but God has many other children in the world, some of them unmothered, wretched, perishing for the very things you could give.

"You have no right to cease using your heavenly

gifts. Cast out this selfish mother love from your soul, and when you have become tranquil again and can see more clearly, look about you for the next thing God wants you to do. Be sure you will find it, and when you do your life will be a fruitful one again. You will wonder if you ever could have been so foolish as to want to live in a reflection of your children's lives."

Mrs. Ravell's tears were gone and her resentment also. She spoke slowly and thoughtfully: "I wonder if I'm strong enough to do it."

"Oh, you are! We are all better and stronger than we know. Unless we test our powers we shall never find out our strength. But do not try to make a new life alone. The strength that is eternal is close beside you. I cannot tell you what you ought to do, but if you will take God's hand and go out, you will find your work. It is out there in the troubled world waiting for you. If you do not do it, it will never be done, and only in doing it will you find peace. But peace is not the right word: in your work you will find a divine unrest urging you on."

"I couldn't adopt a child and take that responsibility again; at least it seems now that I couldn't. Yet I know of two children desperately in need of a home——"

She arose. "Thank you, Doctor Houston. You administer a sharp and bitter medicine, but I needed it. I don't know yet how much of your advice I shall take. But I shall go to a hotel tonight—not back to

any of the children—and stay there by myself until I have cleared away the wreckage of my defeated hopes and plans. Then I shall lay out a new course for myself."

"God speed you on the new course," said Doctor Houston with deep sincerity.

Doctor Houston saw Mrs. Ravell again in church one Sunday. But he had to look twice to make sure it was the same woman. The one who had visited him had been old, embittered, defeated. This woman walked with a light step. She was smartly dressed. She looked ten years younger than the Mrs. Ravell who had talked with him. And there were two children with her, a little girl who clung to her hand and a boy who wore the confident air of a beloved child. When Mrs. Ravell saw Doctor Houston she flashed him a radiant smile.

The Doctor waited for her on the steps outside when church was over.

"I want to be introduced to the family," he said.

"Ah, yes, Doctor Houston, and you certainly ought to be. This is my daughter Judith, and this is my son John."

They shook hands with him, and answered his questions like well-taught children. Then Mrs. Ravell bade them get into the car and wait for her.

"I'm coming in someday to tell you the whole story," she said, "because it may help some other woman who may ask your help sometime. You were right. I had sunk back like an aged woman of the

past generations and wanted to live in the reflected lives of my children. Well, I've set my children free, as you showed me I must. And you were right there too: when I set them free they became my own again. Now we make no claims upon each other; instead we love each other, the daughters-in-law too," she added, smiling.

"Judith and John are the children of a young cousin. Both parents were killed in an accident. There was little money and no one wanted the children. They had been placed in an institution. I've taken them, legally adopted them so that they are mine. And I'm living again. I can't even remember that I am old. And the children have responded beautifully. Oh, I wonder if a man can possibly know what it means to be loved and needed again?"

"Perhaps not," said Doctor Houston soberly.

"But of course you have never given up the blessed joy of being needed. But I'd lost it for a while. Now I can really value it. And I've learned from past mistakes. When these children can stand alone, I'm going to set them free without any reluctance. Maybe I'll take on another family then. But perhaps I'll do something different. Just one thing I know about the future. I'll never settle down to live in the past."

"Thank God for your many blessings," said Doctor Houston.

Chapter X

From a Candlelit Room

Doctor Houston had never before seen the woman who waited in his study. But from the doorway he noted her tragic, hopeless face. She was like a drowning person who had given up and yet clutched at a straw while knowing it could not help.

When he entered she introduced herself.

"I am Katherine Fielding, Mrs. Fielding. I came to you because a friend urged me to come and would not be refused until I promised. We are not church members, so I don't know what good this visit can do. But I promised to come.

"My husband has been brought home from the hospital to die. He begged so hard to come home, and the doctors said it didn't make any difference where he was now. There was nothing more they could do for him. He was in the hospital three months. They operated, but soon afterward he grew worse again. Everything has been tried. The doctors say there is nothing more at all to do—nothing, nothing! It is so terrible to see him. He was such a strong, fine man, and now he's just a shadow. He can hardly raise his hand. I haven't told the children what the doctor said, but they were frightened when they saw him. They know now they're going to lose their father.

"You need not try to comfort me. There isn't any comfort. I don't think I even believe in God any more. Certainly a merciful God would not do this to us. There is no comfort ever for me."

"Not if he should get well?"

"You don't mean that you could—that you could ——" she began.

"Oh, no. I couldn't cure him. I'm no physician or dealer in magic. But I'm very sure God can heal him."

"I told you we are not religious people. I don't know anything about religion—about God. Well, perhaps that isn't quite true. Both Tom and I were brought up in religious homes, and there is still some trace of that training in our lives. I don't think we've been bad. I know Tom hasn't. He's always been so honest and generous and kind. But we don't know about God and—prayer."

"It is comforting to realize that our Father doesn't abandon us when we forget Him. He loves His foolish, wandering children just as greatly as He does the good ones that stay close to home, and He's just as ready to answer when they cry out in their need. The wandering ones are rather handicapped when the time of stress comes. They feel they do not know the Father. They've forgotten what He's like. They don't even know how to call Him. But they can find out if they are really sincere in wanting to return to the place where He can help them."

"Oh, I want to! I want to! Oh, I will be good if He will help Tom. I'll do anything He wants me to

do. Do you think there is any help? Do you truly? Doctor Houston, will you pray? God might hear you. And I don't know how. I feel so lost."

"Certainly I'll pray. But that isn't enough. You must pray too, and your husband, and the children. We must all pray sincerely in faith, sure of God's grace and thanking Him for His good gift."

"Oh, but that is my trouble. I haven't faith. It must take a great deal of faith to pray and believe you'll get what you ask for. I can't believe it. I can only have hope, and scarcely that."

"A great many people have prayed to God without much more than a faint hope, and they have found that He is right there with His boundless love. But faith grows out of these first uncertain steps into the dark. The Scriptures teach us that without faith we cannot please God, which is just another way of saying that without faith we cannot come into friendly relations with Him. To have faith is to speak the same language God does. So you must see what you can do about faith. One man who felt very shaky about his faith cried out, 'Lord, increase my faith,' and he immediately saw a wonderful healing take place.

"Now let us make our plan. All the way home, keep repeating the prayer 'Lord, increase my faith. I need it to work with now. You have promised, and I am depending on You.' Then when you get home greet your husband and children cheerfully. Tell them that God has promised His healing, and you

expect it. Then at eight o'clock tonight go with the children to your husband's room, and each of you pray in his own way for healing to become visible. I will keep that hour for you from eight to nine. You may know that here in the study I will likewise be praying for the great blessing. And before you begin your prayer I want you to say to all of them, 'We are going to pray that God's will may be done now.' "

She cried out at that, "Oh, I cannot! I cannot!"

"But if you cannot pray, 'Thy will be done,' you cannot pray at all. That is what prayer is, appropriating God's will for us."

"But suppose His will is that Tom should die?"

"It is not."

"How can you be sure? People do die, even very good people."

"I'm sure, because God's will is always good, and always designed for our happiness and the fulfillment of good in our life. It is because we and others go counter to God's will that we get into trouble. If all of us sons of man could live completely within God's will we would make the next statement of the Lord's Prayer come true: 'Thy kingdom come . . . as in heaven, so on earth.' Then there would be no more trouble or sorrow or disappointment.

"Now do you feel certain enough that God's will for you is good to pray wholeheartedly, 'Thy will be done'?"

"Yes," she said with trembling lips.

"And remember, after you have made your specific request of the Father, you will say something like this, 'Thank You, God, for reassuring our hearts by all Your promises to hear and answer prayer. Thank You for this gift of healing that we have asked of You' "

"I'll remember," she said. Her lips moved as if she were memorizing the very words.

"Then when next I see you, you will be a happy person. Or are you happy now?"

She looked at him in surprise, and after a moment she said, "I think I'm happy now."

Then as she rose she said, "I wonder what this will do to the children. They are in high school, and we have never taught them anything about prayer. Do you think they will really help us pray?"

"I know they will. Young people's hearts are much readier to accept the wonders of God's grace than we grown-ups think. I know one thing it will do for them. While they may not give much evidence of getting acquainted with God just now, they will remember where they must go to find help when the time of stress comes."

She said good-by and went out, carrying as if in a precious casket the immortal words of reassurance she had heard.

It took all Katherine's resolution when she reached home to meet the children with the sureness she knew was required of her. They were sitting together in the living room, two tall sons and a lovely

daughter, and Katherine knew they had been talking about the disaster overshadowing them. Kathie had been weeping, and the boys were only holding back the tears lest they seem unmanly.

"Children," she said, "father is going to get well. Tonight we are going to pray God to heal him. I want you to come to your father's room between eight and nine. Don't plan anything for that hour."

They said nothing, simply stared in utter astonishment.

She went on into Tom's room. The housekeeper arose and left as she entered. He lay so still under the smooth covers that for a moment she feared he had slipped away while she was absent. But he opened his eyes and looked at her with a faint smile.

"Kit, I feel better," he said.

"Of course you're better; you're getting well."

"Doctors said not."

He knew then. But what did it matter now?

"Dear, they were mistaken. I've been to see someone today, a man of God as truly as any of those we read about in the Bible. He told me how to ask God for your healing. Tonight we are going to pray, all of us, Doctor Houston too, and we're going to know that you're getting well. You will see. He made me understand, so I'm sure."

Tom did not question her. Perhaps he was too weak to talk any more. But his eyes followed her as she moved about. She brought a tray and fed him a bit of liquid food.

Afterward she went to her own room. Was she frightened? Did she still feel sure? She searched her mind. No, she wasn't frightened; only keyed up as one would be on the eve of a great adventure.

At a few minutes before eight she went into Tom's room, carrying a lighted candle in a silver holder. She found the room in darkness. But the three children were there, silent, awed. Tom was awake. She could see his eyes in the candlelight. She couldn't have quite explained why she wanted the candle. There was a dim feeling that in the half dusk they would be closer together, shut in from the world, and ready to meet the invisible Presence that would be there.

Still bouyed up by her excitement she spoke steadily.

"We are going to pray that God's will be done, knowing that His will is always and only good. Then we shall tell God that we ask Him in full faith and trust to make Father well. God likes us to talk over things with Him, because He is our Father, and He is interested in everything that concerns His children. Then we will give thanks because He has promised to hear us, and we know that He keeps His promises."

She knelt beside Tom's bed, and took his thin hand in hers. Someone brushed her shoulder, and she knew that one of the children knelt beside her. She could hear Tom whispering a prayer. With the strength of great desire she made her own prayer,

repeating again and again, "Thy will be done." She thought of the "man of God" praying with them, and of the children whose young lives were touched for the first time by the knowledge of the unseen Power. She uttered her thanksgiving aloud. It seemed the natural thing to do, though that morning she would have been sure that she could not pray aloud. But now she knew that some strange and wonderful thing had happened to her too. She felt the Presence, and one having felt this cannot be unsettled again.

She arose from her knees, and they all sat down near the bed.

"Would you like to sleep, dear?" she asked.

"No, not yet. I'm feeling the miracle. Kit, I really am going to get well. I didn't know it till now."

"Of course you are. Didn't we give thanks for it? Just rest now."

They talked in low tones. Sometimes they all fell silent, and Katherine prayed her thanksgiving again.

At nine o'clock she sent the children out, and got Tom ready for the night. It was not imagination. When she turned on the lights, his eyes had lost that look of defeat, and his voice was stronger.

A week later she went back to Doctor Houston.

"Is it a happy woman that has come today?" he said smiling.

She tried to tell him about the scene in the candlelit room but her voice choked and she had to cease.

"But he is well," she said when she had steadied

herself. "He sits up in his chair most of the day. He is already planning on getting back to business. He eats well and is gaining weight. But if only I could tell you what has happened to all of us. It is as if the unseen Presence that came that night were still a guest in the house."

"As of course He is."

"Yes, He is there, and we are conscious of Him. Nothing else could have changed us so. From that candlelit room something has gone out not only to Tom but to all of us. I want it to go further. When a thing like that has come to you, you want to share it."

"There will be opportunities to share."

She tried to thank him.

"Not me," he said. "Give God the thanks."

"Yes, but you pointed out the way to me. Without you I might not have found it."

"Then I am a voice for God; that is what I hope I can be."

* * *

Doctor Houston never made any requests for himself. But he did sometimes appeal in behalf of other people. He found a group of boys of foreign parentage in his town in need of the friendly direction of some American man. The boys came from homes of good principles, but the parents, some of whom did not even speak English, were quite unacquainted with the needs of their sons in this new sort of community. The boys could so easily be

turned in wrong paths if they were left to run wild. Under direction that they respected they could just as easily be turned into paths that would lead to useful lives. Doctor Houston made his appeal through the newspaper.

The evening of the same day that the appeal appeared a stranger called at Doctor Houston's study.

"I am Thomas Fielding," he introduced himself.

Doctor Houston thought he ought to know the name, but for the moment he could not place it.

"I've come about the boys. I would like to take them on. I have an extra room in my real-estate office, and they could meet there for the present. We could plan things together, hikes and picnics and camping trips. My wife and sons and daughter are keen to help me. You see, we all have the feeling that we owe you something, and we're looking for ways to pay on our debt."

"That's a fine way to feel if you mean you owe a debt to God."

"That's what we mean, but then we also feel that we owe a large installment to you because you showed us how to open a door."

"I?"

"Yes. I'm Tom Fielding. My wife came to you some three years ago when I was dying."

Doctor Houston looked smilingly at the hale, cheerful man for a moment.

"So you are that man. Yes, I think you are the one man that ought to have the direction of these

boys. When people feel that they want to pass on what they have received of the Father's love and bounty, then they are truly useful ministers of God's will."

Chapter XI

A Leaven Works

Doctor Houston was in his garden transplanting daffodil bulbs. It was a hot day for digging, but the job had to be done. In the spring blooming time the daffodil bed had showed that it was overcrowded, and he had promised that he would thin the bulbs as soon as the foliage had died down. This was the time. If he waited till fall the foliage would be quite gone, and it would be hard to locate the bulbs. He had made a new bed, and he filled that. But he put a good many fat-looking bulbs into a basket. He would have some for the neighbors. Mrs. Thorne should have some of them.

He looked up as he thought of Mrs. Thorne. She was his next-door neighbor and a fellow gardener. They often talked over the fine points of flower culture as they worked near the border. Yes, there she was, just on the other side of the row of shrubs that separated the two gardens.

"I have some daffodil bulbs for you," he called.

She came to a division place where she could see him.

"Thank you," she said. "I'll be glad to have them."

With that sixth sense he had developed that told him so much of other people's feelings, Doctor

Houston knew that she was troubled about something. He held it to be an inexcusable intrusion to pry into anyone's problems, but at least he could prolong the conversation and give her a chance to speak if she wished to. He was very fond of the Thornes. If he had had neighbors made to order they could not have been better than the Thornes.

"Perhaps Cary won't thank me for these when he sees that he must make a bed for them," the Doctor said.

"I don't believe he'll mind very much," she said mechanically.

"I didn't see the children last Saturday," said Doctor Houston.

"The children aren't coming any more." Now unmasked pain looked from her eyes.

"Not any more at all?" asked the Doctor incredulously.

"No—that is—oh, they'll come sometimes with their parents for a brief call, I suppose. After all we're civilized people and must preserve the amenities. But they're not coming to stay for any more week ends and vacations. Doctor, you sometimes give people counsel that helps. I wonder if you'd let me tell you about this and see if you can suggest anything—anything at all that might help a little."

"Let us sit down and talk it over. Perhaps when you've laid the problem out before us, you will think of something yourself. Very often these apparently tragic things are not so bad as we picture them."

They sat on the garden bench under the wistaria pergola.

"Imagine me discussing my 'in-law' trouble," Mrs. Thorne said with a rueful smile. "I can hardly believe it myself. But here I am just like any meddling, critical mother-in-law, telling you how badly my son's wife has treated me. And I've tried so hard not to meddle or criticize."

"Even though you saw plenty that could be criticized," suggested Doctor Houston.

"Yes." She darted a quick glance at him as if to see what lay behind his innocent comment. "But I kept silent. I got along very well with my own mother-in-law, and she was a rather difficult old lady at times. And I know she thought I was doing everything wrong, from the cooking to the rearing of the children. I've tried always to be friendly with Evelyn. But there is really a definite break now.

"As you know I've had the children here to stay with us for long periods of time ever since they were babies. I think Evie was rather relieved to have them off her hands at times, and Cary and I loved having them so much. Now to think of not having them any more breaks my heart.

"I think there's been some friction between Evie and Cary, Jr., of late, though of course I don't really know anything about it. Last week when they were here there was rather a sharp dispute between them that left them both quite ruffled. I pretended to hear none of it. Just after that Cary asked his father and

me about making a certain investment that he had in mind. He hasn't much money, and he has to be very careful with it. But it happens we know all about this particular thing, and we both said we thought it would be a fine way to invest the small sum he could spare. We said it before Evie. Now it seems that Evie had been violently objecting to this investment. She wanted to use the money for some new things in the house. She lost her temper right then and there, accused us of meddling and always taking sides against her, and after a very painful scene she and Cary, Jr., and the children left.

"Cary and I decided to ignore the whole matter, and I hoped that when she had had time to think it over she would too. So last Friday I called her and asked if the children would be ready when their grandfather stopped for them on his way home from town.

"She said no, she could not let them come. She was going to spend the week end with the children herself, and try to teach them so that when they were grown up they would be more considerate than their father. In other words, she was accusing me of having brought up my son badly and saying that she was going to do better."

"A laudable ambition," murmured Doctor Houston.

She met his eyes and laughed. Thank God, thought the Doctor, she hasn't lost her sense of humor.

"It is indeed," she agreed. "And now I remember that on several occasions I had the same thought about my mother-in-law: I was going to do a better job than she had done in bringing up children; but I never told her so."

"Ah, but you had wisdom! I hope you still have it."

"I don't know. This seems to have got beyond me, though I have truly tried. Cary and I love the children very much. It's been a great joy to have them with us, and it hurts so to lose them. Of course there will not be any complete break. Cary, Jr., will bring the children to see us sometimes, and no doubt Evie will come too. But we'll never have them with us again, for she says we're a bad influence.

"Now you see how hopeless it is. You've been kind to let me talk, but I know it's silly to ask you if there is anything to do."

"Not hopeless," he said. "No situation ever is hopeless."

They sat silent for a long minute. Then he said.

"You've always disliked your daughter-in-law, haven't you?"

"Why," she began indignantly, "we've got to be honest if we're going to work out a way."

"I want to be honest, but that can have nothing to do with it. I've never expressed any dislike. I've always been pleasant and cordial to her. I've never criticized her, not even to my husband. I've always stood by her. If I did dislike her in my own heart

she couldn't possibly have known it."

"Do you really think, Mrs. Thorne, that you could sit in a room with a person who disliked you without being aware of it? Do you not feel dislike and disapproval and, conversely, do you not feel love and approval as definitely as you feel heat and cold? When you know that radio beams may carry a sound wave around the earth and perhaps even to remote stars, do you think that the still stronger waves of love and hate can be shut within one human mind? If you love, your love is not your private possession: it is going out perhaps boundlessly and endlessly—and hate also! A truly terrifying thought. Hate has infected whole nations and turned their citizens into madmen. There is no cure but love, there never can be! O God! when shall we set enough love in motion to nullify this hate as light nullifies darkness!"

He spoke with such feeling that she could only think with him. What was her small grief beside the tragedy of nations? But in a moment he turned to her again with his understanding smile.

"Come now, you've always disliked your daughter-in-law?"

"Yes. I didn't want Cary, Jr., to marry her. For one thing he was too young to marry at all. He should have taken more time to get established in the commercial world. He crippled himself by taking on responsibilities so early. We disapproved and tried to persuade him to wait. But when he wouldn't wait we made the best of it. We welcomed Evie

into the family. But she's a spoiled mother's baby. She has no idea of pulling her share of the load. She's always fussing because she doesn't get more. She's scatter-minded and can never stick to one course. She runs around with a set of idle, pleasure-seeking young women, most of whom have no responsibilities——"

"Wait a minute," protested Doctor Houston. "Wouldn't it be a better idea to talk about some of Evie's good points instead of the bad ones? I suppose she has some good points."

Mrs. Thorne smiled again. "You make me feel like a carping critic, which is what I am today, though I hope I'm not usually. Of course Evie has good points: she's always truthful, she's a good housekeeper, and she's devoted to the children."

"Well, that pulls the balances down on the right side considerably."

"But how is that going to help so that pleasant relations may be restored again?"

"It isn't going to restore them immediately. You'll have to do it by indirection: by creating a new atmosphere. That takes time."

"Are you going to tell me that I must love Evie?"

"Just that. There is no other way. You must not merely refrain from criticism and mask your dislike under good manners; but you must love her enough to do something about it."

"Now, Doctor, I'm astonished at you, for you know one cannot love to order. We cannot look at

another and say, 'I'm going to love that person.' Doesn't Drummond have something to say about that? 'You cannot love to order. You can only look at the lovely object and fall in love with it.' I read that many years ago, and I've always remembered it. Well, I cannot love Evie. To me she is not lovable."

"Do you hate her? Do you wish that evil may come upon her?"

"Oh, no! Never! I have no ill will toward her."

"That will do for a beginning. I too read Drummond's statement about love many years ago. It seemed true to me then, and I've proved its truth many times since. Perhaps you will recall that he also said we grow in love just as we grow in music, by practice. If you sit down at the piano for the first time today you cannot play Liszt's Hungarian rhapsodies, no matter how much you may admire them. But you can learn a scale and play that, after a while you'll get music a step above the first lessons, and then after a great deal of practice you can play the rhapsodies. That's what you must do with love. You haven't any love for Evie today. You're just ready to begin. But you have no ill will, so that can be your first lesson. That's the first scale of love, so to speak. You'll go a little higher tomorrow, and then on and on until after a while you can play love's symphony."

She said very low, "But suppose I don't want to play it."

He answered, "That, I believe, is your whole trouble. The lessons are really very pleasant, with

easy advancing steps each day. Why don't you want to learn? Is it resentment over past injuries?"

"Yes. It seems to me I can't forget the hateful things she's said and done."

"You must forget. You must cast away every resentment. You must not merely forgive; you must wipe out the offense."

Again there was silence. Then she said, "You think if I just create an atmosphere of love here that in some way it will reach her and change things?"

"I know it will. Tell me, why do you love God?"

"I suppose mostly because He loves me."

"But how do you know He loves you?"

"I see what you mean: all my life, from childhood, I've had the atmosphere of His love about me."

"Fresh living water flowing into a stagnant pool becomes putrid. It must constantly flow out if the pool is to remain sweet. Oh, I know that you haven't been miserly with love; you're always giving it out. But here is one little spot from which you have shut it off.

"You'll have to open the way for love to go there too."

After a while she said, "I seem to have practiced the first scale today. I'll try the second one tomorrow.

"I suppose you are very wise, Doctor Houston. Everyone who brings a problem to you says so. But now I shall deflate you a bit: you haven't told me a thing today that I didn't know myself."

Doctor Houston's smile grew broader. "Exactly!"

he said with emphasis. "When people come to me to talk things over, what I try to induce them to do is to lay all the problem out on the table so that we can look at all the parts in their real proportions. When that is done the person who brought the problem can usually tell what to do himself. We are all wiser than we know, for we all get our wisdom from the same source. We are also stronger and braver than we know, and even better. We should probably know what to do about all the things that trouble us if we would take a fair look at them. But we pussyfoot around as regards our own troubles, uncover a corner now and then, shake our heads and say, 'This is too much for me.' You took a look at the whole matter, your side and Evie's, and you know what to do. Now may God bless you in your endeavor to learn love and then practice it."

* * *

It was only a month later that Doctor Houston was aroused one day by the shouts of children in the adjoining garden. He strolled down to the border to look. There they were, the three Thorne grandchildren, playing with the swing in the oak tree.

Mrs. Thorne straightened up from the lily bed she was cultivating.

"Come over," she said, "and see how your prophecy has come true."

"At least the children seem to be back," he said.

"Yes, my friend, and you must hear about it. It may seem like the simplest working out of a bad

situation, nothing out of the ordinary at all. But I know that under this ordinary happening there is something else. I can feel it all the time.

"I gave up resenting Evie for all time that day we talked together. I didn't go to see her or try any act of reconciliation while she was so angry with me. I knew it would just make her more angry for me to put on a show of magnanimity. I contented myself with creating that atmosphere of love. A few days ago she came to see me. She had had a telegram asking her to come to her mother's home in another State. Cary, Jr., is away on a business trip. She had no one to leave the children with, and would I be kind enough to take them for a few days? Of course I said I would, as naturally as if there had never been any interruption of their visits.

"I asked her if there was anything I could do to help her get ready. She said, 'No, thank you,' and added, 'I do appreciate your unfailing kindness, Mother Thorne.' So here are the children, and here are Evie and I in a new relationship. All this may seem like chance. But I no longer believe in chance in God's ordering of my life. I made my atmosphere of love. When Evie needed me she came to me and at once felt the changed atmosphere. Perhaps she felt it before she came.

"If I had not put love in its place, this happening of her being obliged to leave the children with me could have come and gone and nothing would have been changed between us. We'd have gone on re-

senting each other after the need passed. I know now if you set yourself right, the chances and accidents of life are opportunities to you. I think I know now how to keep myself ready for the chances in God's world."

Chapter XII

Finding a Job

When Doctor Houston came into his study and saw that his visitor was young Bruce Reyson, he smiled with pleasure. He liked young people and felt curiously humble when they sought him out. He frequently prayed that he might be able to offer them some counsel from his experience that would help to guide them.

Bruce grinned engagingly. "I guess I have nerve to come and take up your time, Doctor," he said. "Folks say you are kept busy on important things."

"Nothing is more important than to have a visit with a good neighbor," said the Doctor. "So observe that I am leaning back in my chair. You do likewise, and let's talk things over."

"Thanks a lot," said Bruce, but he looked ill at ease.

"I saw you in that basketball game over at the church last week," said the Doctor. "It seemed to me you played a good game; though I'm not an expert in basketball. Baseball was my game in high school and college."

"Yes, I've heard about what kind of a pitcher you were. That was one thing that boosted my courage to come and see you."

"Does it need courage?" asked the Doctor in mock alarm.

"No, not any more," said Bruce. "So here goes. I'll dump my bagful of troubles out on the table. First I need a job, and I don't seem to be able to get one. I started going the rounds of our city. I canvassed every place where there might be an opening. People were nice to me, I suppose partly because they knew Father. But there was no job, at least in the way of things I could do. Then I went up to Cleveland. It was just the same. I've been out of college a year, and I can't get anything to do even to earn my bread and butter. Of course you know how things are now in these times. There are more fellows being graduated from schools than there are places for. I was hoping I wouldn't be one of the leftovers. But some of us will have to stand around idle."

"Who told you that?"

"Told me what?"

"That there were too many young people and some would have to be idle."

"Oh, I don't know; a lot of people are saying that; people writing in magazines, and making speeches over the radio, and some that you talk to."

"And do you believe them?"

Bruce seemed startled at the question.

"I hadn't thought it over. Some of them are pretty smart people, and I know I haven't been able to get a job."

"Bruce, I didn't think you were one of those fuzzy-minded persons who accept anything that is

told them without putting it under the light of their own reasoning. But go on with your story. We'll come back to this matter of superfluous youth after a while."

"Fuzzy-minded! That's a good one! Maybe I am, and that's why I can't get a job.

"There isn't much story. I've failed all round. I feel useless, unwanted. Father's offered to take me into his business, but that's just out of kindness; he doesn't need me. The business has been shrinking, and there is hardly enough for Father and my oldest brother. And I want to marry Sally Olcott. We've been engaged for two years, and it looks as if it will be a lot longer than that before I can support a wife.

"I heard Father and a friend talking about you last night. They said you helped people to get their feet on solid rock—whatever that may mean. So I decided to come and see you. Doctor, do you know any way a fellow can become more efficient, so he can climb out of this pit? Is there something a fellow ought to believe or some way to do things or—well, something besides this going round and round in failure?"

"Yes," said the Doctor promptly. "I know several things that might be done. So do you when you stop to think. First I'd suggest that you do not believe everything that is told you."

"Including what you tell me?" asked Bruce with a grin.

"Well, at least pass it through your own mind, and see whether or not it is true to you.

"A few years ago, Bruce, you were probably reading the old myths and hero tales about Saint George and Siegfried and Perseus and the rest of them. Suppose the heroes had listened to the defeatists the day before the battle with the dragon! Suppose they had started out thinking: 'I'm just sure to be beaten. No one can destroy a dragon as big and fierce as this one!' There would never have been any hero tales. Another poor chap who listened to the defeatists would have been swallowed by the dragon. You'll have a few dragons to meet. Which is the best way to approach them? Beaten beforehand, or sure you can win?"

"Confidence is an armor of course. And I honestly don't believe I've been unduly fearful. But if there just isn't a job, what then?"

"There *are* jobs always. I just want you to get ready to meet them. Now what would you really like to do? And don't say you would take anything. Too often that means nothing. But what would you like to do above everything else—that you have the ability to do?"

"Marry Sally," said Bruce laughing.

The Doctor laughed too. Here was a youth of spirit. He might have had a rough experience with jobs, but he hadn't lost his sense of humor.

"I commend your honesty. But marrying Sally seems to depend on something being done first."

"Yes, Doctor, and I'm through kidding. I really want to see if there is anything to be done. What do I want to do, and what can I do? For me that's a poser. I'm not the gifted member of the family. My brothers both knew just what they wanted to do, and they're doing it. But I'm a sort of Jack-of-all-trades. I haven't any marked skill or inclination. I'm a fairly good salesman. I went out last summer and did some selling for Father. But I can't take a job there. It would mean displacing an older salesman who needs the job. Anyway I can't look forward with any enthusiasm to a life as a salesman. Honestly, I don't know what I'd like to do. I thought I'd just go out and see what kind of jobs there were, and if one were offered I'd take it. But none was offered."

"Bruce, I suppose by this time you realize that no job will be offered; you'll have to make one."

"Worse and worse for me. I haven't the faintest idea how to make a job. If someone would tell me what to do I'd do the job with a fair degree of intelligence and industry."

"I think that is the trouble with half our jobless young folks: they want someone to tell them what to do. Who do you think told Edison what to do? I'm using that name as an example just because the story of his life is well known. I might just as well have said Lincoln or some great industrialist like Ford."

"But, Doctor, you surely know I am no Edison."

"You are no Edison, but you are Bruce Reyson.

And you'd better make the best of him. I believe in a God who is not only ruler of the universe but also the loving, understanding Father of every one of us. I believe that He placed every one of us here in the world in exactly the right place. I do not believe that we were tossed out on the earth haphazardly, like a toy emptied out of a box by a careless child. I believe that each of us came with a job and the ability to do that job. We look at an Edison and say, 'Great work!' I think God looks at him and says, 'Great work!' too—not because of the amount of it or because of its importance but because Edison did his job! He'll say the same thing to the humblest worker if this worker does his job: his own job, not the other fellow's. Now God is constantly calling us to account for the use we make of our faculties and gifts. What will He say to you when you are called upon for an accounting? Will it be 'Great work, Bruce!' or will you hear 'Slacker!' echoing through your own soul?"

"I never thought of it that way. I didn't know it was so important. Then a job is more than just a way to get some money to do with as you would like. I'd have to stop and think about it before I said what I'd really like to do. I'd have to be sure it was something useful."

"Yes, but don't get too deadly serious about it, Bruce. Remember the circus clown may be doing the job God called him to do. You recall the lovely French legend about 'Our Lady's Juggler'? Keep that

in mind when you are considering jobs. If only Christian people could remember that God put humor and fun in the world too!"

"Doctor, you keep enlarging horizons. I've thought of something—but it just doesn't seem that it could be right."

"Shall we ask God about it?"

"How?" asked Bruce. He looked startled.

"People usually call it prayer."

"I'm afraid I'm not much on prayer."

"You'll have to get over that. If you're starting a new job you'll have to pray all the way along so you will not make any false steps."

"I couldn't pray out loud," protested Bruce, alarmed.

"I shouldn't expect you to."

Doctor Houston bowed his head on his hands. After an instant Bruce followed his example. Doctor Houston rarely prayed aloud with anyone. He felt that prayer was the soul's conversation with God, too intimate for a third person to share. But this was one of the few times when he felt that it might be a good thing to make his meditation aloud in order to let another hear.

"Father-God, here before You is a man who needs a job. He isn't sure yet what You want him to do. He's waiting for You to speak. Now, in this hour when he stands face to face with You, give him hearing ears and an understanding heart. Wake his courage and wisdom to go forward with You. We

know You have already given him the job and all he needs to carry it out well. We recount our needs not to remind You but to establish our own hearts. Now, Father, he takes You at Your word and walks with You. His paths are plain. He knows how to win over obstacles. Your will, Father, be done in him and in all his work now and forevermore."

Bruce kept his head bowed a minute after the prayer was done.

"I never heard a prayer like that. Seems to me the minister usually say, 'O Lord, we beseech Thee to have mercy upon us and hear our prayer.' You talk as if you were sure He hears."

"How can He help hearing when He's right here within us?"

"Doctor, I have thought of something. I've thought of it before, but it seemed so nonsensical that I gave it up. Now while you were talking about God giving us a job and saying that making fun for folks might be God's job for you, why, it came to me all over again while we were praying. I think I'm going to try it. I'll let you know how I come out."

"Just keep listening and you'll know where you ought to go."

"I'll do just that."

* * *

The Reysons lived on the side of the city farthest removed from the suburb where Doctor Houston lived. He did not see them often, and in the next few months he heard nothing of Bruce. Then one

day a heavy square envelope arrived. Opening it, he read an invitation to the marriage of Sally Adelaide Olcott and Bruce Warren Reyson.

Doctor Houston knew that Bruce had made some kind of a job, for from that one interview the Doctor felt certain that Bruce would not take on the responsibility of marriage without having some way to support a wife.

It was only a few days later that Bruce came.

"We're as busy as corn in the popper," he said after shaking hands. "But I just felt that I couldn't get married without coming to tell you what your advice did for me."

"I surely want to hear what kind of job you made for yourself."

"Some time before I came to see you I'd made up a little gadget to amuse my brother's children. It's a ball to be worked around the rim of a paddle. The children thought it was wonderful, and they and I also developed considerable skill working the ball around, tossing it, and catching it with the paddle. I had thought of putting it on sale. Every child that saw it wanted one. Then I would think how much trouble it would be to get it before the public. And people to whom I talked discouraged me, saying I might lose a lot of money and not get a market; this was no time to bring out another amusement device.

"Well, after we talked it over with God that day I got the idea out and went over it again. If I introduced it myself there wouldnt be much money

risked, so I decided to try it. I visited a dime-store manager in Cleveland, and got him to agree to let me demonstrate the toy in his store. Then I took the design into Father's factory, and had a thousand sets made up. The next Saturday I took my twelve-year-old nephew with me to Cleveland. We set up our wares at a counter in the dime store. The boy worked the ball and paddle, and I talked. Doctor, believe me, I prayed too before we began and right along while I was talking. God must have been there. We sold out the thousand sets by the middle of the afternoon at a dime apiece, and it costs less than five cents each to make them. Then we had to come back and rush an order to the factory to make up five thousand sets.

"That's the beginning. I've kept going forward from there. I had to explain to the Cleveland authorities that the twelve-year-old boys we liked to have for our demonstrations were not being worked too long and were not being kept out of school. In the end I got permission to have these boys in the stores for a few hours on Saturday and after school. I've been to four cities. I've demonstrated the toy in some fifty stores. I'm keeping several extra men busy in Dad's shop, and I have two of my former classmates working for me now. By the time we've canvassed the whole country and every kid that wants a set has got one I have another little amusement gadget to launch on the public."

"Fine! Bruce, fine! That's surely an inspiring

story of making your own job."

Bruce's eyes were twinkling.

"You don't feel like some of my friends did. Some of them, the very ones who have been complaining that they couldn't get a job have said to me, 'Bruce, don't you feel silly standing up in a dime store like a barker at a sideshow and selling a ten-cent toy?" I've told them pretty straight from the shoulder that I don't feel any sillier making a ten-cent sale than I would making a hundred-dollar one. And I feel far from silly when I look at the house Sally and I have all ready to go into when we come back from our trip. I think it bothered Mother a little at first that I should have made up that kind of job. But Father said, 'More power to you, Son.' And was Sally the good sport! She went along a couple of Saturdays and helped us sell.

"That's all, Doctor, except our never-ending thanks. You'll come to the wedding, won't you? Sally wants to meet you. And we're inviting you to dinner as soon as Sally has had a chance to practice on me and see what kind of a meal she can wangle out.

"Doctor, you introduced me to God. You let me see that He cares about such a little thing as a man's job. No matter what comes to me in life I'll never feel lost and helpless again. I don't accept any defeatist wail. I go out expecting to win."

Chapter XIII

Face the Other Way

Doctor Houston first noticed her talking with a group of women. She seemed the center of attention. They were all turning toward her, listening to what she said. It was at a neighborhood tea given for a local philanthropy, and the basement room of the church was filled. As the Doctor precariously balanced a dish of ice cream on a ledge he kept glancing toward the group, trying to solve the riddle of the woman's personality.

She held up her left hand, revealing two twisted fingers and swollen joints.

"My arthritis keeps getting worse," she said pathetically.

Doctor Houston grew thoughtful at the ever so faint emphasis on "my."

"I hope it will soon be better," said Mrs. Belden pleasantly.

"Oh, no, it will never be better," said the woman, drawing the deformed hand to her breast with a retentive gesture, as if she feared someone were about to take away her cause for complaint.

"Well, at least, Caroline," said another, "you can be thankful it is only in one hand. It certainly hasn't affected your feet. As I came in I noticed you walking along as briskly as if you had never heard of a bad joint."

"No, it hasn't got to my feet yet, but it's sure to spread. Everyone that has it tells me so."

"No," objected Mrs. Lane, "it isn't sure to spread. I had an attack once, and I got well."

Several others mentioned persons whom they had known to recover from the dread affliction. Doctor Houston looked at them appreciatively. He knew that several women in that gathering refused to put any faith in sickness.

"What did you take?" Caroline asked Mrs. Lane.

"Large doses of sunshine, fresh air, and exercise, well mixed with a cheerful mind."

For Mrs. Lane would not speak of the deep, secret things of the Spirit unless the occasion called for it.

"Oh, you're one of these faith healers," said Caroline scornfully.

"No, I shouldn't call myself that," said Mrs. Lane with a smile.

Doctor Houston turned to reply to a greeting, and when he looked again Caroline was gone.

He thought of her several times that day. Would any of her friends be able to interest her in the idea of letting go of "my arthritis"? He never thrust unasked advice upon people, but he did wish he might have a few words with her. He wondered about her circumstances and connections. He even wondered about her age: sixty-five, seventy, seventy-five? "But when I am ninety-five I shall not look that old," he thought whimsically.

For Caroline was distinctly aged. It was not

wrinkle or line or air of decreptitude but some inner aging. Except for the deformed hand she bore no physical marks. She sat erect, and she walked briskly. Her white hair was becomingly arranged. Her eyes were bright, and she was well dressed. Now why did she grow old from the inside? Did she want to?

No, he concluded. She was merely like so many other groping men and women, holding a physical error close to her breast as if it were a favorite child and molding her life by its false requirements.

She must have been a pretty young woman, he mused, probably beloved, petted, and a little spoiled.

Somehow he was not greatly astonished when a few days later he entered his study to find the caller awaiting him was Caroline. He glanced at the card in his hand and said, "Good morning, Mrs. Perry."

After the conventional greetings had been exchanged he waited with some curiosity to hear why she had come.

"I had to come and talk with you," she said. "Several of my friends have told me such wonderful things about you that I felt if anyone could show me how to solve my problems, you were the person."

"Perhaps people have been too kind in praising me," he said, "but with two minds and God applied to any problem, usually a solution can be found. Tell me about it if you wish, and then we shall see what God suggests."

She looked disconcerted, and Doctor Houston concluded that she was not accustomed to bringing

God into the consideration of her personal problems. But after a moment she told her story briefly and to the point.

"I am Mrs. Conley's mother. I have come to make my home with her, and I am very unhappy. Not that my children are unkind to me—I wouldn't have anyone get that notion. They are kindness itself, but—well, everything is so different from the way I want it. Up to three months ago I lived in my own home in Belmont. Then my children, my son and my daughter, decided that I was too old to live there by myself, and they persuaded me to sell my home, and come to live with Helen. It seemed an ideal arrangement as we talked it over, and though I didn't exactly want to sell the old home I did it."

"You should have stood firm," murmured the Doctor.

"Yes, I half believe so now, but it is done. And you need not tell me to take a small apartment and live here in town by myself. I haven't enough income left to do that. I'll have to stay with Helen till the end of my days. It just doesn't seem fair that I should spend my declining years so. Here I am, old, in poor health, shut in among strangers, unneeded, really unwanted anywhere in the world, unhappy, lonely, just waiting to die."

She was working up to a climax of self-pity that would have been a little absurd if the problem had not been such a real one.

"At home my neighbors on either side were

women that had been my friends since school days. I knew everyone in Belmont. The church was on the next corner, and I can't tell you what church meant to me. A bus line passed my door, and I could go to downtown Belmont in a few minutes, or to the city in an hour if I wanted to shop or go to a concert. Here —well, I suppose you know where the Conley's live, out in the country. They are both gone all day, Mark to his office and Helen to an interior decorating shop in which she has an interest.

"Perhaps you know too that they have no children. The housemaid and I are alone all day. There are no neighbors. There are no houses at all until you go down past the tracks, where there seem to be a number of small truck farms. In driving past I've thought these farmers were foreigners. They have flocks of children running about. Mark and Helen take the car into town with them in the mornings. There is no bus line along Landor Road, and I can't go anywhere.

"When Mark and Helen come home at night they are tired and don't want to go anywhere. They never think to ask if I'd like to go out. I make brief visits to my son's home, but I'm even more unhappy there. They are both so busy, and they just seem to walk around me as if I were a misplaced piece of furniture.

"So here I am, an unwanted old woman. I cannot see that life can ever again hold anything for me. I suppose I was silly to come and tell you my troubles. What can possibly be done to change things

for the few years that I have remaining?"

She had not mentioned the arthritis, the Doctor reflected. That probably seemed a small thing beside the deeper troubles of the mind.

Said the Doctor: "If a five-year-old child were mature-minded enough to seek advice about her future, she might say just what you have said: 'What's the use of trying to change things for the few years I may have remaining?' "

"But," protested Mrs. Perry, "a five-year-old child has its life before it."

"Exactly. So have you. You say you loved your church. Did they ever talk about eternal life there? And did you believe in its reality, or did you just put that down as one of the pleasant old fairy tales? A five-year-old child has her life before her—her eternal life. But we do not know how much of it will be spent in her present environment. Children pass on into another life. A child has no more assurance for next year or even tomorrow in his present setting than you have. Do we then say that there is no use in educating the child and teaching him how to direct his life? Certainly not. For we believe that even if the child goes out of our sight he takes with him the imperishable parts of his education. So will you conclude that it is worth while to set your life in order. You may spend only another day in your present environment, but on the other hand you may spend five, ten, twenty years there. Shall we go on, or shall we say, 'It is too late, the day is done'?"

"As you put it, the only sensible thing to do is to try to better things and go on. But I don't know. Perhaps I shall spend the rest of my life in a wheel chair, with the children being kind to me but feeling a little relieved when I pass on and they no longer have to care for me. Perhaps I'll have to wait for heaven before things are set right for me. I suppose you believe things will be set right in heaven. You seem to have such curious ideas."

"No, I don't believe heaven is sufficient to set things right.

"Let me tell you something I learned when I was small. I was taken to a Sunday school picnic in a grove on the banks of a lake. I'd been looking forward to it for days. But for some reason the picnic fell far below expectations. It was dull. I went to my mother whining that I wasn't having a good time, and she answered, 'Of course not; you didn't bring a good time with you.'

"I feel that way about heaven; it probably will not come up to our expectations unless we take some heaven with us. Have you got your heaven all ready to go with you?"

She looked shocked, but answered, "I'm afraid not; my life is far from heavenly. But if you can suggest anything that would make it more endurable, I shall appreciate it. Someone said you might cure this arthritis, but of course I don't believe in faith healing. It seems all nonsense to me."

"Can you take strong medicine?" he asked, "or do

you require to have your Truth sugar-coated?"

She stared at him strangely and was silent so long that a nervous person would have felt it necessary to say something. But Doctor Houston only waited.

"I don't know," she said at length as if she were thinking aloud. "I think people have usually been nice to me and said the pleasant thing. And I know what you are going to say will not be pleasant. I don't know where I'm wrong. I've always tried to do the right thing. But go on and say it. If I can't take it I'd better find out."

"You've taken the first step out of the dark place right now," he said with an encouraging smile. "Now here's the strong dose:

"You've determined deep down in your subconscious mind to be old, failing, useless, unwanted, unloved, sick. And you've got all the things you have unwittingly set your mind upon. You have accepted the thought of the long generations of our forefathers that at a certain time man should fail and decay. You have not even considered the freedom with which Christ came to set us free. You have drawn these evil thoughts in so close to you that they are a part of you, and you yourself are the only one that can break the bonds and cast them away.

"You say I cannot cure your arthritis. No, I cannot—I never cure anyone, but sometimes I can point people to the place of healing. God Himself couldn't cure you while you clasp that error to your heart. You want to get instead of give. No one ever gains

happiness by mere getting. Giving is the only way. All the ages of man's life have proved that over and over, but how slow we are to learn it!

"You want to get more attention, more love, more flattery, more amusement. You'll never get any more. But have you considered what you have to give? In that direction the door will open into a rich, abundant, satisfying life. When you begin to give you take God's hand and go out with Him. And there is no limit to the path that opens before you.

"Can you turn around and face the other way, adopt new objectives, new methods, new views? In short, can you make your life over? You say you miss your church so much. Probably it gave you a great deal. Now let me tell you of a church that will not soothe you with a fine choir and a splendid sermon, but to which you can give. You spoke of the foreign settlement across the tracks. Those people are mostly Poles, and fine, industrious, self-respecting people they are.

"There is a little mission church down there that tries to minister to their spiritual needs. It is in woeful need of helpers. Go down there next Sunday—with God. Ask Him to show you what to do. It is less than half a mile from your home, and an active woman like you will not find it a hardship to walk that far. By the way, busses pass that corner, and will take you anywhere—back to spend a day in Belmont, to the city for the concerts, if you so desire.

"After you've found out what you can give, let go

of all these thoughts of failing, of old age and disease. When you walk with God you have no moral right to keep such ugly companions. Body and spirit, you must dress in beautiful attire and keep company with the loftiest thoughts."

She said nothing when he ceased; only sat with that brooding look on her face. Again he left her to her silence. After awhile she arose, said thank-you and good-by. But she did not say whether the medicine had been bitter or whether she would try the cure.

* * *

Three months later the Polish pastor of the mission church asked Doctor Houston to come out to speak to his people. Doctor Houston accepted with alacrity. He wanted to see what they were doing and what friends were helping them.

He arrived early, during the teaching hour. He saw Mrs. Perry across the room with a group of girls about her.

"Do you know Mrs. Perry?" asked the pastor, noting his look. "She is our good angel. She teaches that class of girls on Sunday mornings. On Wednesday afternoons she has the girls come to the basement, which she has fitted up, and she gives them lessons in homemaking. On Thursday evenings she has a domestic-science class for the mothers. And on Sunday afternoons she comes here again and reads to anyone, young or old, who wishes to come in. She calls her readings 'The American Way.' She brings

stories of noble deeds and inspiring things that the poets and heroes have said and done. Afterward they talk about what has been read.

"More people come for the reading than come for my sermons, and that is very well; for she brings the best from the world's great minds for the reading.

"The girls adore her. They think she is the perfect American woman. I believe they will try to model their lives on hers."

After the service Doctor Houston waited for Mrs. Perry.

"I'm driving past your home," he said. "Come with me."

"Such a thought-provoking sermon," she said when she sat beside him. "But you are always giving gifts. And now I'm going to give you one, one I imagine will be very pleasing to you. It is this. What you said to me that day I came to you has saved me from a sour, discontented, useless old age. I am at work and happy. So far from fearing I am unwanted I know I am needed. Please God, I can carry some of His abundance to these simplehearted new Americans. You have my saved life to your credit, and whatever I can do for these others."

"Thank you for a very great gift," he said. "Sometimes I have the joy of seeing that I have been able to pass help along. There's nothing like it."

As he was leaving her at her door he said, "How's the arthritis?"

"Oh, I forgot about it when I was so busy fur-

nishing the room at the mission. And when I looked again it was gone."

Her eyes were brimming with laughter as if she had told him a good joke.

Chapter XIV

You Can Love Again

Hester Palgrave pushed her untouched plate away and rested her head on her hands, while her husband, dark with rage, stormed out of the dining room. The meal had ended in another of those senseless quarrels that filled her with disgust and fear. Her mind went back over it.

Hal had been sitting at the table silent through most of the meal, and she had not disturbed him with comment or question. Then he had said reflectively without looking up: "Hutton says the measurements must be wrong, they won't do at all, they don't make sense."

She did not know what he had been thinking about, and she had said, "What measurements?"

He had looked up with wrath gathering on his brow as if her innocent question had been quite wrong.

"What measurements?" he had mimicked. "How do you want me to say it? Some more of your schoolteacher precision. A nice time to show it off. You'd think this was of no importance. If you ever took the slightest interest in my business—but, no, your little cut-and-dried rules are more important than the business that brings in our bread and butter."

"But, Hal," she had protested. "I don't know what measurements you mean."

"What measurements have I been talking about for the last week?" he had shouted. "You never listen to anything I say except to pick holes in it. How I hate superior people!"

It was at this point that he rushed out of the room, probably not hearing her retort: "I've known for some time that you hate me. Let me tell you the feeling is mutual."

She heard the front door slam. She was glad he was gone. Of late everything she said and did aroused his antagonism, and seemingly the most harmless remark was likely to precipitate just such a burst of rage as this. Each ugly scene left her feeling faint and sick. She had always loathed quarreling, loud voices, violence of any kind. She had always prided herself on being self-controlled, well bred. What malign fate had cast her lot with a person so uncontrolled and violent?

He must hate the very sight of me," she reflected. "Anything I say or do arouses his temper."

She decided clearly that she would not try to bear it any longer. Matters between them were getting worse, not better. There was no reason why she and Hal should remain together when the association made them both wretched.

With her decision came a sense of freedom. It would be wonderful to live in peace again and not have to go tiptoeing around Hal's temper every day. The children were old enough so that the separation would not affect them much. Alice was in her fresh-

man year at college, and the twin boys were in a good prep school. Probably Hal would let her keep the home so they could come to her for vacations. She would not ask for it or for anything else. But smallness was not one of Hal's faults.

She would leave the next day after he went to town, and she would send a note to his office. He could write to her to tell her what he wanted to do. She did not want to talk to him again—not ever.

She called Dessie in and gave her instructions about the next day's meals, saying she was going on a short trip to her old home. Then she went upstairs and packed her bags. She heard Hal come in, and she was thankful that he did not come to her door.

When she awoke in the morning she lay still to make her plans. By this time she found that some nagging unrest had crept into her heart. Was she right in terminating these unhappy relations? Was there something more she might have done to save the marriage? What would it do to the children to know that their parents were separated? She had honestly tried to make at least a decent, peaceful relationship out of her marriage. She found that she no longer cared that love was gone.

"I'll talk to Doctor Houston before I go," she said.

The thought came to her crystal clear, as if it were an inspiration sent from something beyond her.

The Doctor was an old friend. She knew how clearly he saw problems and how fearlessly he diag-

nosed them. When she sat in his study waiting for him, she found she was trembling. It took resolution to lay before a third person the intimate secrets of husband and wife.

When he came in he greeted her warmly. Then giving her a keen look, he said, "You're in trouble, Hester. Is there anything I can do?"

She said: "I'm leaving Hal. Our life together has become unbearable—for him too, I'm sure, as well as for me. It isn't right to continue living together when there is nothing but antagonism between us. I think he hates the very sight of me. Everything I say or do arouses him to anger."

"And you—do you hate the very sight of him?"

"No, I don't hate him at all, but neither do I love him. I'm quite indifferent to him. But I could live with him in peace and keep up appearances for the sake of the children if he would observe some of the decencies of behavior that a man observes even with acquaintances. But I've had to give up."

"Just when did you lose your love for your husband?"

The question was a startling one, but after a moment she smiled.

"I've heard that's what you do, Doctor, you put the problem right back for solution to the one who presented it. You haven't made me indignant. Certainly some of this is my fault. Hal would undoubtedly tell you of many things he has to complain of. In some way I've ceased to be attractive to him. I

'rub him the wrong way,' though honestly I don't know just where I have failed. I've truly tried."

"I'm sure you have tried. But you haven't answered my question."

"I'm going to answer honestly what you ask. Let me think."

She thought back over their years together, those first lovely years. They had been so deeply in love. All the joy they had asked was to be together, doing things for each other. They had been poor in money, and had had to plan and contrive. She had never minded that. How glad she had been to do without a new dress so that Hal might have some equipment he needed. How triumphantly she had showed him a smaller grocery bill, and how he had praised her housewifely skill.

And then slowly but steadily Hal had come up in the business world. She had not had to contrive any more. There was plenty. But surely they had not grown apart because they were comfortable! Yet from those years of ardor and giving love she seemed to have stepped into this place of antagonism and resentment. The considerate young husband was gone, and in his place was this hateful stranger. Honesty compelled her to go further and ask herself what changes he now found in her. Why, oh, why, had they changed?

"I don't know," she said, turning to Doctor Houston. "Truly I can't tell when I ceased to love him. We did love each other so tenderly, and someway, I don't

know how, we have spilled that precious wine of love, and now it is too late. We can never have it again."

Her voice held a note of despair, and Doctor Houston spoke quickly and briskly.

"Now wait a minute. You are going too far with such a conclusion. It is true you can never again have that wine of romantic love which once made your life a joy. When you spill that, it is gone forever. If young people could only realize how precious it is and carry it with reverent hands, their lives would gain not only in joy but in achievement. Some married lovers do keep it. Even for them it does not remain that first romantic love, but it is transmuted into something indescribably finer and richer so that their lives bless all that they touch. You see, all the love in the world is some facet of God love, and it is continually opening new treasuries of peace and happiness.

"But as you say, your cup of romantic love is shattered, and we need not talk of transmuting it. You must begin anew. Because we know God, at least in some small measure, we never come to despair. Here is a wonderful thing. God does not cast us aside as useless because we have made one mistake or two mistakes or even seventy times seven mistakes. There is always forgiveness and hope and a fresh start if we will turn and follow Him.

"Now do you really want to save your marriage? Is there anything in it worth saving? It is not good for two people to live together in hate."

"Yes, I'd like to save it, though I don't see how it can be done. It's no use calling on Hal for any co-operation."

"We're not going to call upon him audibly. You and God are going to manage this."

"You don't know how hopeless it is. I can't of course go into details of quarrels, but let me tell you what happened last night."

She told him briefly and without rancor of the scene at the dinner table.

"Hal's always doing that, making remarks that he expects me to understand and then flying into a rage when I don't know what he is talking about."

"H'm. That sounds as though he might be having business troubles," said the Doctor. "Is that the case?"

"I wouldn't know; he never tells me about his business. But surely it can't be. The Palgrave Company is as solid as a rock." There was a look of alarm in her eyes.

"Even rocks have been known to split or roll down the mountain. But never mind about the business. What I want to know is, do you mean to have me think you are not clever enough to manage such a situation as that? Suppose a rich, eccentric old uncle, who may leave you his fortune, is visiting you, and he is given to making irrelevant remarks out of a clear sky. Will you antagonize him by catching him up for explanations? No. You'll make some pleasant noncommittal remark, and lead him on until

you get a clue to what he is talking about."

Hester looked ashamed that she had not thought of such a simple plan. But then she had not wanted to smooth things for Hal. He irritated her so. They used to go over their problems together. Of late he had been shutting her out. She resented that. She wanted to catch him up.

"Hester," said the Doctor, "you have said you want to save your marriage. And I tell you that you can. It will not be easy. You must find something to take the place of that romantic love that once made living a joyous adventure. Again it will be love, another kind of love. Perhaps you'll find it impossible to believe me when I say it will be a better love. But that is true, as you will find when you go on. Love will solve any problem in the world. It will heal any hurt. It will give you wings on which to rise to any height. You must go clothed and armed with love. You must never lay it aside for a moment, day or night."

"Ah, but you see, Doctor, I do not love him. I just don't. All that is gone."

"Well, perhaps the whole blame for the wrecked marriage is upon you."

"But I've never told Hal I don't love him. I've been a good wife. I've kept my feelings to myself."

"Life is continually refuting our idea that we can keep our thoughts and feelings to ourselves. What we think secretly is speaking out with a hundred tongues. Have you ever sat in a room with a person

who strongly disapproved of you? Though he did not say a word, nor even look at you, could you not feel the disapproval, the dislike? And in the intimate relationship of marriage you cannot hide your dislike from your husband. Of course he knows it, and it fills him with anger; and perhaps just now he is needing the loving co-operation of his other self, his wife. You've failed him in his time of need."

"Perhaps I have," she said humbly. "But what can I do? One cannot turn on love to order like turning an electric switch."

"No, love isn't like that. But there is something you can do about turning love on; you can act as if you loved. Perhaps when your children were small you sometimes were scared, but you knew you must not show fear before them. So you acted brave. What happened?"

"Before long I wasn't afraid any more. I see what you mean. When you are afraid you take the attitude of courage, and soon you have no fear. When you are gloomy, you take the attitude of cheer, and before you know it the gloom is gone. So you think that if one is unloving one may take the attitude of love, do the deeds and speak the words of love, and after a while love, some kind of love, will come."

"I not only think so, I know it. I've seen it tried many times. I tried it first myself in my childhood. I loathed cantankerous old Aunt Agatha. Then my mother told me of a sad thing that had befallen her, and it so touched my childish heart that I began

trying to make it up to her for what she had borne. It ended by my loving Aunt Agatha, and she spoiled me outrageously through all my childhood.

"And remember, Hester, love solves all problems. If you had told me your husband were a drunkard, or unfaithful, or a miser, or an idle wastrel, I would have recommended the same solvent. Until you have your own evidence try to believe it will work. It will work with the children too if there is any conflict between you and them."

"There is no conflict with the children. Even when we disagree they know I have only their good at heart."

"In other words, they know that you love them."

"Why, yes."

"You see?"

"Yes, I see, and thank you," she said as she arose to go.

"Come back when it's worked out."

"Yes, I'll come."

* * *

Hester drove home from her interview with Doctor Houston in a mood of exhilaration, as if some wonderful thing had happened. To the surprised Dessie she merely said she had decided to make her visit later.

The next thing in her plan was to prepare a meal that Hal especially liked. She smiled a bit at this commonplace beginning of such a momentous project. Back in those early days whenever she and Hal

had been celebrating some small triumph she always had made a deep-dish apple pie for dessert. That is what they would have tonight.

"I don't know as I can make one," said Dessie, when Hester came to the kitchen.

"I'm going to make it. You can watch me and learn how. You are quick at learning new things."

A pleased Dessie wondered what had come over the mistress to make her so pleasant. It was her first word of praise for many a day.

The pie turned out to be a masterpiece of its kind, and was set in the pantry.

"Serve it with plain cream, not whipped," she instructed. "Many men do not care for whipped cream, and when they work so hard all day we ought to try to give them what they like to eat when they get home."

Hal came in preoccupied as usual, and looking at him closely, Hester wondered if he was worried. His only greeting was a grunt as he sank into a chair and opened a newspaper. He read until he was called to dinner. The first part of the excellent dinner passed in silence. But that was usual. Then Hal said: "The plan might work if only he hadn't alloted so much for advertising. We can't afford it. We'll have to try something else."

She opened her mouth to say impatiently, "What plan?" for she had no idea what he was talking about. Then she closed her lips again. Here was the place where she must win her "token victory,"

where she must demonstrate that she was clever enough and loving enough to get around a threatening situation. She thought of Doctor Houston's illustration of the rich eccentric uncle, and smiled.

What she said was, "I hope you can make him see your reasons, and that together you can work out something."

"Yes," Hal went on as if still thinking aloud "I must call Weber up in the morning and arrange a conference. Of course we must advertise, for it's all new, and we must create the demand."

"I'm curious," she said. "What point will your advertising stress?"

Now for the first time he looked directly at her.

"I'll bet you could help with this," he said. "The gadget is for housekeepers only. We'll go into the study after dinner and I'll show you the plans, and maybe you can suggest some advertising angle that Weber wouldn't think about."

"Oh, Hal! If I only could!" she said with deep feeling.

Just then Dessie set the desert before Hester.

"Deep-dish apple pie!" said Hal. "It seems a long time since I saw one."

"It won't be so long until you see the next one. Do you remember how we used to have one when you had made a sale, or some other fortunate thing happened? Well, when we get this advertising campaign launched we'll have another for good luck."

"Do I remember!" said Hal. Then to Dessie:

"Dessie, you're a jewel to make a pie like that. I know by the looks of it it will simply melt in my mouth."

"I didn't make it, sir. Mrs. Palgrave made it. But I watched, and maybe I can make the next one."

Hester lay in her bed that night, hugging her new-found wisdom to her heart. That hour in the study had been like old times. She had "acted as if she loved Hal." And how he had responded! There was the familiar gesture of his arm about her shoulders as he talked. Now she knew all about the advertising plan, and she had been able to offer some suggestions. She knew of course that her battle was not won. There would be other and more trying things. There would be many times when she would feel that she must fling back an angry word. But she must not—not even once.

She could not only save her marriage, but she could summon a new love that would be better and more enduring than the old. She had won a token victory by managing the first difficult incident. She could go on from there. And the apple pie too was a symbol. She would think of other things they had once shared, and perhaps she could plan to renew some of them.

"How stupid I was not to think of some of this when I first noticed that our marriage was slipping into indifference and resentment! But as Doctor Houston says, it was lack of love. I let my own hurt feelings stand in the way. I was continually thinking

what was due me. I stopped considering Hal at all."

She could not sleep. She kept planning. When she was a young girl she had lain awake and planned like that to win Hal's love. How she had planned and contrived to make herself the sort of girl he would love! Now she was doing the same thing in a new way. She was planning how to make Hal feel that she was the sort of helper he could not do without. And she turned a critical eye upon herself, just as she had done in those days of youth. She was willing to make herself over. She was no longer planning how to make Hal over into a considerate, amiable husband.

It is amazing how love sharpens the wits. Now she remembered all sorts of little things that would please him. Years ago it had been her habit to cull amusing or striking paragraphs from her reading, and read them over to him at the dinner table. Then they would talk about the excerpt. He had liked that. He said she kept him up in literary matters when he did not have time to read books he wanted to. She decided to find the most amusing brief bit she could and read it to him tomorrow night, just to see if he would like such a plan again. She slept at length, to awake in the morning with a sense of expectation. Something pleasant was going to happen today! And it did.

* * *

It was six months later that she went to talk with Doctor Houston again. Among other things she said: "The whole thing was done that first day, when I

stopped in my tracks and turned around, facing toward love. It was not at all hard to 'act as if I loved Hal.' I guess I must have loved him all the time. Making him feel that I love him hasn't been easy, and it isn't easy yet. He still says horrid things to me sometimes, and there are times when I long to throw something at his head, and I think maybe that would be good for him. I'm not a meek person at all, and I don't act like one. But I'm a wiser person than the whining wife who came to talk with you six months ago."

Doctor Houston grinned. "I'm sure that at times most husbands deserve to have something thrown at their heads. But be sure to pick the right time."

"Well, I've learned that wives deserve some such treatment too."

"And you've also learned what it is that brings two differing temperaments into harmony and happiness."

"Yes, I've learned love's lesson. Since you said to me that all love is a part of God's love I've been looking at it that way. All real love is forever giving and never demanding. But such is love's magic that you cannot pour it out without getting back a greater measure in return."

Chapter XV

Ready for a Blessing

THE VISITOR was still standing when Doctor Houston was summoned to his study on a lovely summer afternoon.

"I am Cecily Landon," she said and then went on all in a breath: "Are you willing to talk with someone who is a stranger, who has no claim on your time, and who has no money to pay for anything?"

"Of course," said Doctor Houston. "You see I haven't anything to sell. All my time belongs to the Master, and anyone who can make use of what I have to offer is doing me a kindness in giving me an opportunity to serve."

Her eyes widened. "How extraordinary!" she said.

"Not at all. The world has many people in it as eager as I to serve our great common brotherhood. Will you sit down? If you wish to tell me your perplexities we shall see if together we may find wisdom to direct you."

She had been standing there tense as if she had gathered up her last reserve of courage to make this desperate appeal. Now she seemed to relax as she sank into the easy chair. But she said an astonishing thing: "I wish God were like you."

It even shocked the Doctor a little, versed as he was in the vagaries of the human mind. "Oh, no!"

he said, "you mean it the other way around; you wish I were like God. What I am trying to do is to show one reflection of God here in my small niche in life."

"But you are kind. You not only listen to me but you make me feel welcome. I don't feel welcome to God. I feel He is continually drawing away from me. I haven't found God kind. I've prayed and prayed, so hard, and things only get worse. Perhaps I haven't any faith, but I've prayed hard for that too."

"Since you've prayed 'hard' without avail, let us try praying 'easy,' as Jesus did."

She sat silent for a moment as if trying to understand that.

"But don't we have to ask and seek and knock at the door?"

"Oh, yes, indeed, but these things need not be painful and laborious. I do not find it a hardship to ask a favor of someone who has already offered to do the favor for me, nor is it painful to knock at the door of a friend I long to see, or to seek for flowers in a blossoming garden."

"You make it all seem so simple, but it isn't, it isn't! It is hard and terrible, and now I am driven to despair. If God will not hear me I cannot see any way out.

"I am a widow with three children. Two months ago I lost my job with the Tracy Department Store in the city. I'm good at sewing, and I was in the alter-

ation department. They had to cut expenses, and people were dropped from every department. I was the newest one in alterations, so I had to go. I haven't been able to get another job. The securities my husband left have shrunk in value, some of them so much they are not even salable. None are paying dividends now."

She opened her worn handbag and put it on the table open. She drew out a five-dollar bill.

"Here is my last bill, and no more is in sight. The rent for our two rooms is paid up to Saturday. After that what? Three children to feed and clothe and shelter, and God will not hear me. What am I to do?"

"Your purse is open. That is right. It is ready for money to flow into it. Put the bill on the table. We're going to bless your money so that it may grow into such abundance that you may never know lack.

"In your childhood you read the old story of the miraculous pitcher. It is one of the fairy stories going back to the childhood of our race, but it is deeply and profoundly true, as those ancient people understood. When the gods blessed their supply they would never lack. It is true today. When we know that God blesses our supply we shall never lack."

"But don't you see, it's got to be right away. What shall I do? I can't find a job, and money doesn't drop down on us from the skies."

"No, money doesn't drop from the skies. It comes through the avenues of orderly law that God has established. It comes because we are giving service

somewhere. You can find out what you are to do. Stop being afraid. You cannot hear the still small voice when your heart is filled with the specter of fear.

"You've got to listen to God now. You've got to, do you understand? Apparently all human sources of help are gone. There is no one but God, and that is a good thing. God often has to wait until we drive ourselves into a hard place before we will turn to Him and listen to Him. We are all His children; each one of us is dear to His heart, as a human child is to a good father's heart. But we keep turning our back on Him, shutting out His voice, running hither and yon for support and help. Sometimes we are so imprisoned by want and sickness and despair that we can see no hope anywhere, and then we turn to our Father. You've got to turn now, and listen and find out what to do next."

"I'll listen! I'll listen. But suppose nothing happens!"

"But something will happen. Come now, let us talk to God and see what He tells you."

She did not even bow her head when he bowed his. She continued to stare at him. Doctor Houston prayed aloud this time, for he saw that she had been so battered by her fears that she needed more than ordinary reassurance.

"Father-God," he said, "here is Your child coming in her need and trusting You in faith. She knows the promises You gave through Jesus Christ, and she

now asks that they may be fulfilled in her life. She now gives up her worries and fears and doubts. She now waits quietly before You for Your grace of abundance to be revealed. She gives thanks that she knows You and can come to You with a child's assurance. She now leaves all in Your hands, for Your direction and blessing."

After a while she said: "I never prayed that way, as if I were sure. I thought we had to beg and beg and maybe God would notice us. I've always been afraid, because I know I don't deserve anything."

"There I cannot agree with you. Because God's universe is controlled by divine law, each one of us receives just what he deserves. If good comes to us it is because we deserve it, and if the law brings us a hard experience it is softened by the fact that God loves us. Now can you go back to your children with a happy, confident heart?"

"I do feel better, I do have hope again, but I can't be sure as you are sure. Tell me what I'm to do to keep from being frightened. When I get back—why, the children are really hungry, and I've been afraid to spend this money."

"Stop at the market as you go home and buy a good meal for the family. Stop being afraid to spend the money. There is plenty more. Then after the children go to bed sit down and talk with God. Just tell Him all that is in your heart, your longings, your hopes, and your fears and needs too. Then wait for the voice. You will get direction of some kind.

Whatever it is, no matter how trifling it may seem to you, do it.

"Sometimes great things hinge on trifling actions. The most astonishing change came into my own life because I obeyed an urge to make a call upon a person I didn't even know very well. To tell what came of that would take a book. So do not dismiss any leading you may get as too trivial for notice.

"And let me tell you that I am not talking from theory. I was once down to my last dollar and nothing in sight. I know all about it."

"I believe you, and I do believe God. I will keep calm, and listen. I know now that I am not alone."

"I think you've learned your lesson. Now look at your bill upon the table and give God thanks for multiplying it so that you will never know lack. Look at that empty purse and know that it is always filled with God's gifts."

She turned to where her possessions lay on the table, and her lips moved in silent prayer. Afterward she stood up. The look of strain was gone. She looked like a different person.

* * *

Mrs. Landon lived in the heart of the city, and Doctor Houston in a village suburb nearby. So he would not hear of her unless she came to him again. He did not forget her, and he was not troubled about her.

A month passed before she came again. The Doctor came in one afternoon to find her waiting for him.

"All must be well with you," he said. "I was sure you would find a haven."

"Haven!" she echoed. "Yes, that's just the name for what I did find. It's the story of a miracle, and I had to come back and tell you; because if it hadn't been for you, I never would have found it. It's just as you said. My fears and worries had shut up every door so that nothing could reach me. I couldn't even think any more.

"The day I left you I did what you said. I was past planning, so I had to have someone else tell me just what to do. I stopped and bought food. I refused to be frightened as the bill melted away. I bought what I thought the children ought to have. I went on home and greeted them gaily. The darlings had been so cast down by my gloom that they were almost afraid to speak to me. But we all talked and laughed over the supper and had one of our old 'good times.' Then after the children were asleep I decided that I would follow through with your directions.

"I sat down and talked with God as if He were sitting across from me. I talked out loud and told Him everything, how scared I'd been, how I knew I hadn't been a good child. I had neglected Him when things were going well; but I wanted Him to forgive me and let me try again. I told Him I wanted a home for the children and a chance to bring them up decently, and I asked Him to tell me just what I ought to do next. Then I got quiet and listened.

"The most absurd idea came to me after a while.

It was that I should take the children out into the country for a picnic the next day. I couldn't believe that this was my word of direction. I waited, and the thought persisted. So I said, 'All right, I'll take the children for a picnic.' I had enough money left to pay our streetcar fare. I went to bed and slept.

"In the morning I still felt we ought to go on a picnic. So I told the children, and we got ready in such an atmosphere of hilarity one would have thought we'd never had a care in the world. We packed up some sandwiches and set out. We rode to just the other side of the little village of Ashbury, on the other side of the city, where I saw a lovely woodland. So we got out, and the children and I walked in the woods. They admired the flowers, and they found a patch of wild strawberries and had an exciting time gathering enough for our lunch.

"It was just a small woods, and after lunch we walked through it and came upon a lane that led up to a big white farmhouse. I said we'd walk up there and see if we could buy some milk to drink. On the way up the lane we came to a cottage set in an orchard. We knocked at the door to see if we could get milk there, but found the cottage empty. So we peeped in the windows and decided that this was just the house we wanted. There was an orchard with ripe cherries at the back door, and the children wanted to pick some. Of course I said no, and read them a little lesson on respect for other people's property.

"When I had finished a pleasant voice said, 'The trees belong to me, and you may pick all the fruit you want.' I turned around to see that the farmer had come up to the fence beyond the tree and was standing there smiling at us. We thanked him. The children picked some cherries and sat down on the steps to enjoy the wonder of ripe fruit that did not come from a fruitstand.

" 'I heard you say that you liked the cottage,' said the farmer. 'Perhaps you'd like to rent it. I'm looking for a tenant.'

"I told him that I would like very much to rent it, but I could not because I had to stay in the city to earn money for my children's support. He asked me what my work was; I told him sewing. He said, 'I think your coming here is providential. Just this morning my mother was bewailing the fact that she couldn't get anyone in the community to do the quantity of household sewing she had in the workroom. Perhaps you'd come up to the house and talk with her. You and she might come to some arrangement so that you could take the cottage and pay the rent in sewing.' By that time my heart was beating in excitement. It is awe-inspiring to see the hand of God reaching out in some simple human manner and leading you where you should go.

"We went up to the house and I talked with Mrs. Dennison, who was lovely. If I would take the cottage she would have enough sewing for me to pay the rent. When she learned that I could do any kind

of sewing from hemstitching sheets to creating dresses and hats she assured me that I could find as much work as I wanted to do among the near neighbors.

"I was almost bewildered by happiness by this time. I said we'd go home and come back on Saturday. Then both Mr. Dennison and his mother said, Why take the children back? There was enough furniture stored in a room in the barn to furnish the cottage, and two men would be sent from the farm work to carry it in. I could have milk and butter and eggs and vegetables from the farm supplies, and we had lots of fruit on our own grounds. So that very afternoon I was established in a house fully furnished, and I was getting a supper of wholesome food, while I heard the children shouting joyfully out of doors. All this was on a self-respecting basis; it had to be earned.

"I went to work the next morning, and I've been busy ever since, working happily and earning my share of the abundance you said God has for us."

Doctor Houston's eyes were shining as if some great piece of good fortune had befallen him.

"My dear child!" he said. "I'm so thankful! So thankful! If we had planned it we'd probably have figured out some job for you in the city, and the children would still have been shut up in an apartment in the congested area. But we left it all to God, and He took you by the hand and led you out to your rightful place.

"Have we both learned something? Hereafter we'll not try to plan for God. We'll leave it all to Him and follow His voice. And again when we come to a hard place, we'll know it is God saying that He has a new way for us to take. It reminds me of what the poet Tagore says: 'Ever didst thou save me by hard refusals.' When God says no to something we've planned let us remember that He is saving us by what seems a hard refusal, and let us get quiet and see what He says."

"Oh, Doctor Houston," she said, "you make it plain. I was groping after some such thought as that. I'm thanking God that I lost my job and had nowhere to turn except to Him. But I've also grown wise enough to know that I must not be simply a greedy person who gathers in blessings: I must pass them on. I'm trying to learn to do that."

"Yes, we must pass them on. Blessings that stop in our own hands have a way of going bad, like the manna that the Children of Israel tried to store up and hoard. It's only the blessings that flow through us that bring us refreshment. You've got a job bringing up three of God's children to be a glory to His name, but even with that you'll find all sorts of little kind things you can do by the way."

"I know," she said. "I've found some of them already."

Chapter XVI

No Backward Turning

WITH AN attempt at lightness the visitor said: "I come to you almost like a thief in the night, Doctor Houston. I didn't tell any of my family, and I would rather no one knew I had consulted you."

"I am the soul of discretion," said the Doctor, smiling.

"I understand that this room is almost like a confessional and that nothing said here ever goes beyond the walls unless the grateful person who has talked with you chooses to tell it, or is willing that the story be told. And you know, very often the person you have advised so wisely does tell, just because he wants someone else to know about the help he received. But I shall not tell. This is a different kind of problem. What you may tell me couldn't possibly be of help to any other person."

"Dear lady, do you believe you have a unique problem, the only one of it's kind in the world?"

She hesitated a moment, then nodded: "Yes, in a way I have. Not that I am the only sinner needing to make restitution, or the only heartbroken prodigal seeking to come back home. But there are some peculiar circumstances. I don't want anyone even to know I came here. My family and friends believe I am fortunate and carefree——"

"Are you sure they think you carefree?"

Dread looked from her eyes. "Am I sure they think me carefree? Yes, I think so. I've not let any shadow come over my home—yet. And I've been gay and casual with my friends. Doctor Houston, wouldn't you have thought I was a happy woman?"

"No, Mrs. Gary, I thought you were a troubled person."

"Then perhaps others do too," she said as if to herself.

She sat silent a moment and then plunged into her story.

"I suppose there isn't any help for me. I don't see how there can be. Oh, I think God will forgive me, and perhaps in heaven things may be set right. But when you've committed a sin that has injured others, you can't just forget it, even if you are forgiven. It goes on and on. 'Whatever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.' Do I know the truth of that! That black reaping will be going on all the rest of my life. I suppose you will try to comfort me by telling me that God forgives sin. But you don't believe the results of sin can be wiped out, do you?"

"Yes, I do."

He did not enlarge the simple statement, and she stared at him unbelievingly. Then she went on:

"But not mine. Years ago when I was a young girl still in high school I did some terribly wicked things. I did these things deliberately. I knew they were wrong. I did not have the excuse of sinning

either ignorantly or on sudden impulse. I injured not only myself but at least two other persons. When at length I saw where my sin would lead me I turned back, and from that day to this I have never ceased to suffer remorse. Shall I tell you what I did?"

"Not unless you feel that telling it will lighten the load on you."

"It wouldn't. I'd go on suffering just the same. I just thought perhaps the shame of owning up might be good for me."

"Shame is not good for you. It is a bad emotion, and usually a mixed one. Let's have as little of it as possible. And while you ought long ago to have tried to make amends for your sin in deepest humility and repentance, you need not repent to me nor humiliate yourself before me."

"I see what you mean. You're outside this and untouched by it. Sometimes I feel that God is outside it and unconcerned about it."

"There you are wrong, as I hope I can help you to see yourself."

"But there is one who is not outside it, my husband. Lately I have been tormented by the thought that I ought to confess it to him. And each time I've been about to tell him, I've drawn back. I just couldn't bear to shatter all his trust in what our life together has been."

"It's fortunate you had that saving common sense. Did your sins injure your husband?"

"Not directly. These things were done years be-

fore I knew him. But he married me thinking I'd always been a good and lovely person. I was sailing under false colors when I gained his love."

"You were? Well, that alters the matter. Then at the time your husband met you you were not a good woman? You had just put on a mask of goodness and were waiting for a chance to go back to your evil ways?"

"Oh, no! No, I'd not go back, ever. There hasn't been a moment that I haven't loathed those past deeds."

"Then you were a good woman when he met you. That again alters the matter. And you were right not to tell him then or ever. Are you afraid he may find out from someone else? Or are you in danger of the law, so that you may be detected and called to legal account?"

"No, there is no one in the world that could tell him. And I don't think I broke a man-made law. If I did no one could ever discover it now. You see, when I came to myself, I left my home town and came here and started to build up what I hoped was a new life. I had no family, and that made it easy for me to break off all connections. There's no legal penalty I ought to pay."

"Very well. Now first let us consider this matter of confession, which seems to be the most pressing weight on your mind. To confess to your husband would be another unjustifiable wrong. You would be laying upon his shoulders the burden of your

remorse. He is guiltless there, and there's no reason why he should bear that load. There is someone who will take the load, but it isn't your husband. If you yield to this uncontrolled emotionalism you will destroy the happiness of all your family.

"Now let us talk about what happens to sin and sinners in the light of what Jesus taught. Perhaps a modern parable will clear up some points on which you have been thinking wrongly.

"Let us suppose that a city man has bought a small farm for a vacation retreat. He comes to visit the farm. He walks through the orchard, gardens, and meadows. One field seems to be well grown with a nice-looking green herb two or three feet high. He goes into the field to investigate. He does not know the plants are nettles. In a few minutes he is so stung by the nettles that he is in torment. He realizes too late that he has heard of nettles and has been warned never to touch them.

"What do you think he will do when he realizes that these are nettles, and that their power to sting will last as long as the plant does? He'll be sorry he came in of course. But will he sit down there, draw an armful of nettles up close to him, and mourn deeply because he ever came into the place and because nettles sting so severely? Certainly not. You know he will get out as speedily as he can and apply something soothing to his swollen, reddened skin. Next he will warn the children not to enter the field. Any city visitors who come out he will

also warn. And then he will grub up or otherwise destroy the plants that look so attractive but have such power to hurt. He'll not allow a good field to be wasted in the production of nettles.

"You, like most humankind, once wandered into a nettle field. The sensible ones got out again as soon as they realized how nettles sting, but you sat down in the field, hugged the nettles to your heart, and went on living with their torment all these years. Before you leave this room today I want you to get out of that nettle field."

"If only I could. Is there something I can do? Tell me. No matter how hard it is, I'll do it."

"Very well. Get out of it. That's the beginning, but not the end. That past is as dead as the days of the pyramid builders.

"When you abandon a sin what happens? If you believe in God at all, you take your repentance to Him. You confess to Him fully and tell Him that you have turned from this error. You say, 'Father, forgive me.' You say this many times in the Lord's Prayer, perhaps sliding over the petition without being aware of its meaning. Christ put it in that prayer worded almost casually: 'Forgive us our debts.' No groveling in the dust or beating of the breast or piling up of penalties. There is a condition, to be sure, which must be exactly fulfilled, and you must have faith enough to believe that God can and will do what He says.

"Now you have asked the Eternal to forgive you

as you have forgiven. That sin is done with forever. It can never rise to confront you again unless you yourself resurrect it. And for you to go on hugging this same sin to your breast and mourning over it is simply to deny all faith that God will keep His promises. He said He would forgive you. You don't believe He can, so you keep gathering up the nettles.

"Put yourself in the place of the one asked to forgive. Suppose I had committed a grievous sin against you. When I came to myself I begged you to forgive me. You forgave me freely and fully, telling me never to think of it again. But next day I came back, again bewailed my sin, and asked you to forgive me. You assured me that you had dismissed the offense from your mind, and told me not to think of it any more. But the third day I came again and asked forgiveness. By this time you would feel somewhat impatient with me, and you would ask me if I couldn't take your word when you told me the offense was wholly forgotten.

"You can see how absurd my behavior would be in respect to another person. But that is the way you have been behaving toward God. You asked His forgiveness for your sin. He has said He would forgive you. Yet for many years you've been dragging this same old sin around with you and asking God over and over to forgive you. If God were human like you and me He'd feel quite impatient with you by this time.

"So once more you must come out of your nettle

patch before you can take the next step toward setting your life right.

"You say you realize the truth of the fiat 'Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.' But do you? Have you ever sown anything but sin? Haven't you cast some good seed anywhere along the years from which you may expect a wholesome and bountiful harvest? Is that old sin your only sowing?

"We children of the Father are often such gloomy souls. We've taken this truth about sowing and reaping for a word of doom. We quote it only when we have an evil harvest in mind. It isn't a word of doom. It's a word of blessing and joy. There is nothing to prevent your going out and scattering good seed today and all the days to come. And the harvest is sure. Why do we assume that the law will work only if we've sown bad seed?

"But you have one more doubt that must be laid before you can face sunward. You asked if I believed the results of sin can be wiped out. You are afraid that even though God may forgive you, He cannot do anything about the results. Well, He can and does. It would take too much time for me to tell you the scriptural and historic stories showing that God does stop the results of sin in mid-course and turn all to His glory. That happens when a child of faith is working with God.

"When you go home today read again the story of Joseph as a sign and symbol for you. Then ponder on the other stories that will certainly spring to

your mind. The old prophets had a sure vision about this. How did Isaiah see it? 'Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow.' Trust God for the cleansing, and you will no longer feel stained.

"You asked what you are to do, and you are right in asking. This is not solely a matter of emotion. It is not all a matter of praying and communing with God. Your work is not done when you have believed and accepted forgiveness. We must always be doers of God's word and not hearers only, lest we deceive ourselves.

"Here is the doing part. When you've asked and received God's forgiveness, go to the one you have wronged and ask forgiveness there. Whether he forgives or not, make all the restitution you can. If you've stolen, restore the value of the things stolen. If you've slandered someone, go and take back the evil words wherever you've spread them. If you've lied, tell the truth.

"These are only examples of outstanding, visible sins. We know quite well that many sins cannot be dealt with so forthrightly. We may have shirked some responsibility and there's no one to confess it to; but here we can usually make restitution. Perhaps we've led others into wrongdoing. Here our task of restitution becomes bigger and more complex.

"You are an intelligent woman. You know whether you can make or have made direct restitution for your sin, or whether you must have recourse

to the universal treasury of human mercy and kindness to get your deeds redeemed. But in no case can you be excused from doing something. You have made such a habit of remembering your sin that you need special training in the doing of deeds of restitution. Whenever a nagging memory comes to you, get up at once and do something kind for someone else. Do something that takes a real effort. You'll find that this quickly disposes of tormenting remorse.

"There's one thing more to think about. David knew this truth: 'Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee.' When you've finally turned from your sin, you may make it an instrument of God's glory. If you'd had the opportunity of talking with just one of the women who followed Christ when He walked the earth, which one would you choose for understanding and counsel? Ah, yes, Magdalene! We'd rather tell our story to her. In the village where the prodigal son lived there were other boys who thought of trying the excitement of the far country. Who do you think could warn and counsel them? Who could tell them with conviction that there wasn't any profit or happiness there? The boy who had been through it."

The visitor left the Doctor's study. The haunted, unsatisfied look was gone from her eyes. The Doctor knew she was thinking deeply about the next step. She was done with wallowing in remorse.

"I too," mused the Doctor. "I need the counsel I have given today. O God, turn all the experiences

of my life into faithful instruments for Thee."

Mrs. Gary was deep in thought when she reached home.

"Do something that takes a real effort."

She knew the first thing to do.

At dinner that evening she was especially gay with her husband and the children. As dinner was over and the children were rising to go about their affairs, she said: "I want you to wait a minute. I want to suggest something that concerns all of us, and I'd like to know how you feel about it. If we all want to do it, I think it would be nice to invite Aunt Julia to come and make her home with us."

She thrilled to see a flash of joy across her husband's face, and the children were prompt in their approval. They all remembered their happy childish visits with Aunt Julia.

Julia Thain was John Gary's aunt. She had brought him up from babyhood. She took the place of a mother to him and grandmother to the children. Mrs. Gary had known for a long time that John would like to have Aunt Julia in his home, now that she was old and quite alone. But Mrs. Gary had not wanted another person in her home. She said to herself, if it were John's mother she would not hesitate, but this was just an aunt. John could send her money, and they would go and see her often but not bring her into their home. Now she had seen that here was one thing she could do both for John and Aunt Julia. It was only a first thing. There would be

many others. But this should be a beginning. It wasn't a hard thing, for Aunt Julia was a cheery and wholesome person who could probably give them as much as they gave her.

The children were gone, and the husband and wife arose. John came around the table to put his arms around her.

"Harriet," he said, "you are truly a good woman."

Chapter XVII

The Great Open Secret

Doctor Houston had noticed Hester Corson several times lately, and he had had a feeling of pity each time he saw the look of pain in her eyes.

He couldn't help knowing something of her story. The neighborhood had seen the tragedy. As one blow after another fell upon the head of the once happy young woman everyone who knew her sympathized. But there was so little one could do. Hester retired into herself. She discouraged those who would have offered what comfort friends can give. She never spoke of her troubles. She wanted no pity. She confided in no one. She waded through her sea of sorrow slowly, agonizingly, oblivious of the hands held out to help her.

Doctor Houston thought about her, prayed about her. But he knew he should not speak to her unless she took the first step.

So when he was summoned to his study one golden autumn day he was glad to see that Hester was waiting for him. Now he could tell her some of the things he knew so surely.

In the spring Hester had lost her mother, whom she adored. Before she could adjust herself she lost her job, and this was more than the loss of a mere job. She had devoted herself to music as a vocation

and an avocation. She held a responsible and well-paid position with a music-record company. She really taught music appreciation. For all sorts of organizations and occasions she arranged programs telling a connected musical story by means of records. Then the record company sold out and closed up. The radio was cutting down their business. A dozen people besides Hester were thrown out of highly specialized jobs, and there seemed to be no immediate opening for any of them.

"But Hester will marry and make a home," her friends said; for her engagement had been announced before her mother's death.

Then suddenly the engagement was broken. The man to whom Hester was betrothed went to another city and met another woman who displaced Hester. The unhappy girl had the difficult task of announcing to her family and friends that she was not going to marry Kurt Burley. If she had belonged to an earlier generation she would probably have "gone into a decline" and adopted a life of permanent invalidism, ministered to by her pitying family and friends. But modern girls have no such alternative. They must keep their heads and adjust their lives.

So Hester put on her mask of reserve. She kept looking for a job in the city. Only her eyes showed the pain that was consuming her.

Doctor Houston's warm handclasp and matter-of-fact greeting seemed to relieve some of the tension.

"I've come for counsel," she said, "like other peo-

ple of whom I've heard, though I must tell you at the beginning there isn't a thing you can do. Indeed there isn't a thing I want done. I'm not sick in body. I am sick in soul, but it is the kind of sickness that cannot be cured. No one can give me back my mother, and I surely don't want to forget her. I'm not the kind of person who has to pour out her troubles to someone else. I couldn't bear it if you pitied me. I don't know why I came; and yet after I got to thinking of you I couldn't dismiss the thought. I kept wanting to come and talk with you. I don't know why."

"God sent you," said the Doctor with conviction.

"I don't think so. You see, I haven't turned to God at all since my mother died. Before that how I prayed! Afterwards I saw what a fool I had been to think a prayer to the Ruler of the universe could change the course of natural law. I don't pray now. God doesn't care about me."

"You may not care about God, but He has not stopped caring about you. For you are His child. He doesn't forget you any more than a loving parent forgets his child. He wants to set your life in order. He doesn't want you to waste it."

"I can't believe He cares. No, I can't. Love doesn't inflict torment."

"No, it doesn't."

She considered for a moment, then said, "May I tell you about it?"

"Yes, do. I want to know your story as you see it."

"Of course you know about me. I'm sure neighborhood gossip has seen to that."

"I've heard your story as it was viewed by your acquaintances. But let us not be too severe on gossip. Neighbors ought to be interested in each other and ought to be genuinely concerned about each other's joys and sorrows. We've wrested that word from its original meaning. Now we think of gossip as idle chatter or spiteful stories about another. Originally a gossip was a sponsor at baptism, then the word came to mean a close friend, and much later it descended to its present low estate. The neighbors spoke of you, all of them with sympathy and many with understanding."

"You give the word a new meaning. That's because you yourself are kind. But I've been resenting the fact that they talk about me.

"My mother died last March. Before that I'd been the usual kind of Christian. I was a church member. I believed in God. I thought vaguely that by the magic trick called faith prayers might be answered, but I'd never really prayed. I'd never had a strong desire that was not fulfilled.

"When Mother became ill and the physician told us how grave her condition was, I prayed with all my might. Doctor Houston, if ever a prayer should have been answered that one should have been. I wanted just one thing. I wasn't praying for myself. I told God I'd suffer anything if He'd just let Mother get well. Of course God did not interfere

with natural law. She got worse and worse—and died.

"With the agony I went through something in me died too. I can never believe those preposterous promises in the Bible. I believe in God, yes, for I have enough intelligence to see that the universe is run by law, and where there is law and order there must be a mind and power. But 'our Father'—no, I don't believe that, nor that 'God is love,' nor that 'like as a father pitieth *his* children, *so* the Lord pitieth them that fear him.' He doesn't care, nor probably even know that I exist. I'm just one of the atoms of the universe.

"Then after that terrible grief, I lost my work, work that I had prepared for all through my school and college days, work that I truly loved, through which I could express myself and perhaps be of some use in the world. Now because of a change in popular taste there is no other opening for me.

"Then Kurt. After Mother died I know I was not a charming person. He seemed to shrink from my grief. And probably I did only think of myself, but who could dream that love was such a weak thing that it would run away just when it was most needed! Kurt was at work in another city. At first he came to see me each week end, and he was such a comfort. Then he wrote that he was too busy to come. He wrote several times a week, then once a week, then a month went by without a letter.

"Finally came the apologetic letter saying that he felt our engagement was a mistake, that we no

longer felt the same toward each other. I wrote releasing him, and before I had time to tell my closest friends that the engagement was broken he married a girl in the other city. Is that love, a thing that has no stability, or strength, that is destroyed by the first storm!"

"No, that is not love, and some day you will know it. Some day you will be able to look back and smile at this. May I tell you a bit of personal history? When I was just out of college I fell in love with a girl that gathered all the graces of life into her one person. I prayed with fervor that I might win that girl. I could not. I met her ten years later, and how I thanked God that He had answered my prayer in His love and wisdom and not according to my hasty boyish desire!"

"Yes, I can see that that might be true. But I still think I love Kurt with all my heart.

"Now you can see how my life is cut off from all the avenues of love and even usefulness. I'm adrift on a wide and threatening sea. I could gladly give up life now. I cannot see why I should continue to live when there is only pain and frustration for me. My life doesn't count with anyone. Oh, I'll not commit suicide. I have that hard streak from my Puritan forebears which will not allow me to run away. So I suppose I shall live on growing more embittered, useless, and unlovely."

"No, I don't think you will."

"Do you mean you can see any hope for me?"

"Certainly I can. What kind of a world do you think our Father made? He did not leave us to fall helpless before the onslaughts of grief and loss."

"Don't talk to me about faith and prayer and maybe self-sacrifice. I have no faith, I cannot pray, and I will not sacrifice myself to an uncaring God."

"I'll not just yet, though I shall talk of the place where you can find faith. I'll try to tell you what prayer really is, and I'll show you something far better than self-sacrifice."

"Do you mean you know—for sure—how I can come out of a place like this?"

"Yes, I know. I can tell any person how to come out above sorrow, loss, lack, misdirection, and frustration, but I cannot always induce him to try the method. I can even tell the warring world how to free itself from the agony into which it has been plunged, and for which it blames God—but I cannot force it to believe me and try it. But before I give you this 'open secret' there are some things you must set right.

"What about the rest of your family? I know Doctor Corson slightly, and I saw him a few times with your mother. It must have meant an adjustment for him when she passed on. I could see that they were devoted to each other. And you have sisters and brothers, haven't you?"

"Yes." She looked even more depressed, if that were possible. "Father and Mother had a beautiful life. They were always in love, even with their

grown-up children around them. Father—well, I don't know how he gets the courage to go on. As for my sister, I don't know whether she really suffered or not. She seems so hard, so unresponsive. And the boys—I don't know about them either. They must miss Mother. I'm sure they loved her. But they do not show any grief. You can't get at a boy's thoughts. I know what you are thinking—that I have failed my family, just as life has failed me. I suppose I have. But I just haven't it in me to turn thoughts out and look at their needs."

"But that is what you must do, turn your thoughts out from yourself. Whenever we get into real trouble it is because we have turned our thoughts in upon ourselves. And Christ teaches us that that is the thing we must not do."

"I know. Self-pity is destructive. I despise self-absorption as much as you do. But can't you see this? I'm sunk. I'm like a drowned person. I no longer have anything in me to help me get out of the depths. I may sound like a coward and shirker, but I've no more strength or courage or will or faith or altruism. I'm done."

"Yes, I do understand that. I'm not blaming you or condemning you. I'm not even telling you to make an effort and a fresh start. But I am going to tell you how to reach up and take the Hand that will draw you out of the depths—not with your strength and faith but with His. He will set your feet on a rock, and He will make the way plain before you.

"My child, whether you like it or not you have been marched right up to the 'narrow gate' of which Jesus spoke. You must choose now. Either you must stay outside, in one of the broad ways that can never give you peace, or else you must go through the narrow gate and come into unity with your Father."

"The narrow gate! Yes, that is it. Only a few enter, and I cannot do it. I'm not good enough."

"I do not think it is a question of how good we are, but only of our desire to enter in. Sooner or later we all face that gate and make our decision. We go along with Jesus through Gethsemane and the suffering of the Cross. Can we go all the way to the triumph of Easter morning? And before we talk of the next step let us look again at the 'narrow gate.' What are gates for?"

"Why, to go through to get into a place."

"Yes, to go through. We do not live in gateways. We only walk through them. Many Christian people are in error as to the meaning of the narrow gate. They think it means we must walk along a path hedged in with rules, deprivations, penalties, hard laws, unlovely routines. What an ill thing to think of our Father! True, the gate is narrow. We must drop all our impedimenta before we can get through. We cannot enter with a pack of sins or doubts or fears upon our back. This must be left behind at the gate. But when we have dropped all the burdens, we ourselves can press through. Then we come out

into the broad meadows of the Father's grace. There is sunshine over us, still waters and green pastures before us, and we can 'dwell in the house of Jehovah forever.' Now, will you go through?"

"If only I could!"

"You can. Now about prayer. You think the Ruler of the universe is much too occupied to pay any attention to atoms like you and me. Our finite mind cannot begin to think what His powers and attributes must be. Jesus knew this, and He knew that we should only be stunned and terrified in thinking of this mighty power. So He taught us about some other attributes of God. He said and bade us say, 'Our Father.' After He had shown the people about Him the beauty of His own character He said things like this: 'I and the Father are one.' 'The Father abiding in me doeth his works,' that is, the works of mercy and love.

"If you could see Christ with your material eyes you wouldn't hesitate to tell Him your woes and to ask His help. Well, He is here, and He and the Father are one. They are love, not just a great abstract love but a warm, close love for you as a member of the family. All the saints of all the ages have known that when they talked with God and listened to Him He was with them, as a Father and not as a mighty power of the universe. Saint Augustine said that when he prayed, he knew that God gave ear to him as if he were God's only child. That is what we need to learn, that God is here, dwelling

with us, interested in the small things that concern us, loving, strengthening, and guiding us as if each one of us were God's only child. Can you pray again to the Father as if you were His only child?"

She was weeping quietly now, and he did not wait for an answer.

"Your mother—surely you believe in eternal life—you know your mother has just gone through a door. We do not know what happens in that next room of God's house. But knowing as we do God's love and wisdom, we don't spend much time speculating about it. Jesus prepared the place, so it must be pretty fine; and the lives that had an upward vision may have breath-taking opportunities to adventure forward.

"Your job! God does not shut one door without pointing us to another door that will open on better things. But we miss the new door sometimes because we turn our back on it and stand grieving before the old closed door.

"Love! Love is not gone because one person fails us. There is love for you. Give it a little time. Keep the altar fire burning. Believe me, you will look back and smile at this some day.

"Now as a final word I'm going to tell you the great 'open secret' that is guaranteed to set any life in order. You know it too. We all know it, only it's so simple that until we've tried it we won't believe it can work such a change.

"It is merely to live every moment of every day as

if Jesus were right here beside us. Turn to Him with any small joy or triumph and whisper, 'Thank You.' In weakness ask strength. If in doubt say, 'What ought I do now?' Tell Him all your needs, desires, aspirations. Tell Him that you want the same mind in you that was also in Him so that you may always do the Father's will and thus live the abundant life.

"Will you do that for just one week and then come back here and tell me what has happened?"

"Yes, I will. I'll pray again as if He were here and cared. I'll really try. But I want you to pray for me too. You make it so real, but when I go out from here I may be frightened again."

"The only reason this seems real is because you realize that Christ is here. Remember you are not going away from Him; you're going with Him. I will pray, and you—well, you will just 'pray without ceasing,' as Paul recommended. For when you realize Christ's presence every thought is a prayer."

* * *

As Hester got into her car to drive home she kept saying in a whisper: "Christ is here, close beside me. He'll show me what to do." She knew she must not let go of that or the black cloud of despair would settle over her again. She entered the house still almost unconscious of her surroundings. But in the hall she was halted by sounds that were all too familiar of late. Her father and her sister Kathy were in violent argument in the study. Was there any counsel now for her in Christ's mystic presence?

"If Mother were here, she'd understand. Nothing ever goes right since Mother's gone," cried Kathy and flung out of the room.

Hester stood by the stairway. "God forgive me," she was saying. "They are all missing Mother as I did. The younger ones need her more than I, and I've not done a thing to help them. Christ, show me what to do."

She went into the study first. Her father sat with his head bowed in his hands. She bent and kissed him without speaking. Then she went upstairs and knocked at Kathy's door.

"Is it you, Hester? I don't believe I want to talk just now."

"That's all right," said Hester. "But I want some help. Our meals have been so tasteless lately I thought we might do something about it. I'm going down to the kitchen to stir up some gingerbread. Will you make one of those fruit salads that the boys like so well?"

"Can't you tell Tilly to do it?"

"You know very well I can't. Tilly has to be shown how to do things. Come on and help me and let's have a good dinner tonight. I don't want the boys to get to staying away."

Kathy came, though ungraciously. But once at work she became interested. She put on a fresh bright tablecloth and showed Tilly how to set the table properly. Tilly was an untrained household helper. She did nearly everything wrong, but with

many demands on his income, Doctor Corson felt that under the circumstances he could not afford a competent housekeeper. Neither of the girls had taken the slightest interest in the house, so the family had struggled along with Tilly's bad cooking and haphazard management.

As the three went on preparing a really good dinner Hester came to her second step. Tilly was eager to learn. She watched the making of the gingerbread and the salad, and said several times, "I think I can do that."

"Of course you can, Tilly," said Hester encouragingly.

She was thinking: "Christ, You are showing me the second step right here at home. I've been giving Tilly frowns and criticism, and I could have been teaching her so that she would be better prepared to do her work. How easy and pleasant You make things when You stand beside me and direct me."

The dinner that night was a great success. For the first time in months the family seemed drawn together again. Ted gave them some of his funny imitations of various people, and Kent talked earnestly of some new high-school work. Doctor Corson said little, but he seemed to appreciate the well-cooked meal.

After dinner Kathy prepared to go out, with a defiant look at her father.

When she was gone Hester said to her father: "I know you're troubled about Kathy's being with that

crowd, but we'll do something about it. We'll invite her young man friend to dinner next week, and we can talk with him. He might surprise us by being much nicer than we expect."

"Of course, my dear, that's the thing to do," said Doctor Corson. "Invite him here, and then we'll know what we'd better do. It takes a woman to think of the right thing in such a crisis."

For two weeks Hester went on with the routine duties of the home. It was truly a home again, with the domestic machinery running smoothly. Hester was conscious of a new respect for all the women who make good homes. She had underrated them, never thinking of their work as important. Now she saw that she needed that unseen Friend beside her if she were to do the work well, and she saw too that it was quite important that she ask God to put a special blessing on it. She herself in every hour of the day turned to the Presence beside her. She no longer had to make an effort to remember that He was there. He was so real to her that she turned her face toward Him when she whispered her request for direction or patience or wisdom.

But opportunities did not stop with her own family and Tilly. Friends and neighbors who had been repelled by the cold restraint that showed in her manner were quick to feel the changed atmosphere. People began to come in again. Invitations came to Hester.

The first time she was invited to a home where

there would be several guests she hesitated to accept.

"Christ," she said, "I don't believe I feel gay. I'm at peace now, but I don't feel like a party." She sat for a while as if waiting for an answer.

"Oh, I know," she said smiling. "Cana of Galilee! Almost the first thing You did when You began Your great work was go to a party, and I should say You were the life of the party. It would have been a failure but for You. And You went to many feasts, and You talked about weddings and suppers. I suspect You thought it was quite important to mix with people and have fun. I'll go to Anne's dinner tomorrow night if You will come along with me."

A week after Anne's small dinner the door to which Doctor Houston warned her she might be turning her back suddenly began to open, and she saw a rich prospect beyond. Her heart was brimming with such gratitude that she had to go to see Doctor Houston again.

The Doctor looked at her sharply as he came in. Then he smiled.

"You've found Christ good company," he said.

"Oh," she said, "how shocked I'd have been by that speech two months ago! But that's just the truth. I've found Christ good company, and want to tell you about it.

"The first things He led me to were just common things at home. Father was lonely and worried about Kathy. The house was run badly. Kathy was defiant and getting out of hand. The boys were spending

their evenings at other fellows' homes. I asked Christ to show me what to do, and I went along just doing the common things every day.

"We had some of Kathy's friends in. The young man we were so worried about is a poor boy who has had no opportunities to learn gentle behavior. But he's sound. He might be a young Lincoln, and Father's taken to him wonderfully. He declares that Tim Evans is going somewhere. Tim comes to the house several times a week now and always talks with Father if he is at home. So that trouble is all settled. The boys bring their friends home now, and I know Father is happier. Then there's Tilly. Kathy and I agreed to teach her housekeeping, but she's going to outstrip her teachers before long. Just common things, you see, Doctor."

"Yes, my child, just common things, glorified by the light from heaven. Have you stopped to reflect that Jesus spent His life doing just common things? There was no high adventure until that closing scene when He took up the challenge of all the powers of hate and sin.

"He walked up and down the dusty roads. He visited the houses of the rich and poor alike. He talked about a wandering son, a good neighbor, a shepherd seeking lost sheep, a farmer planting his field, a rich man giving a feast, a poor man seeking a job, a repentant woman redeemed from evil, a young man who loved money too much. He lived a very common life. And when you asked Him to

keep beside you while you tried to solve the problems at home, He was just doing the common things again. He knows all about them. Keep on trusting Him."

"But that wasn't all, Doctor. He showed me the door.

"I went to Anne's small dinner party, remembering that Christ seemed to like parties. I determined to forget myself and be interested in the people there. Something was said that recalled to Anne the work I used to do, and she told of a program I'd given before some visiting celebrities one time. A man who had hardly spoken to me said, 'Are you still engaged in that work, Miss Corson?' I said no, and explained that the music company for whom I had formerly worked had closed its doors. 'But that's no reason for giving up such work; surely you know the field for music appreciation is enlarging all the time.' That astonished me, for I had been sure it was just the opposite.

"After dinner the man talked with me and at length asked me if I would come up to Cleveland the next Saturday and give a program in the assembly hall of the music department of Cleveland's largest store. I said yes, thinking it was just another program.

"I won't go into details, but I kept asking advice of my Helper as I arranged the program. On Saturday when I was taken into the assembly room I faced an audience of nearly five hundred. It fright-

ened me for a minute, until I seemed to hear my Helper saying: 'Now keep your head. There may be an opportunity here.' Then I noticed that about half of the mothers had brought children with them, and I'd planned the program around an opera that children could understand. So I told the story to the children, and told them what to listen for as the records were played. For the whole hour of the program I had the most flattering attention from everyone.

"Mr. Hill handed me a check when I was ready to leave, and I'm going to go back every Saturday and give a series of educational programs.

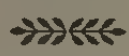
"That's only the beginning. I've already been engaged for other programs. I can see a work opening before me greater than I ever did with my former employer. It is work that I love to do and that I think enriches others' lives." Her voice broke on the last words, and she winked back tears.

When she left him Doctor Houston looked after her with a smile.

"She didn't say a word about the love that failed her. I suspect it's pretty well crowded out, and with the one she calls her Helper beside her she'll come to the real love after a while."

Chapter XVIII

The Barriers Between



"HOUSTON, you are looking upon one of your failures."

The man sitting opposite the Doctor seemed to make this statement with a degree of satisfaction.

"Yes?" said Doctor Houston in an inquiring tone.

"A month ago I came to you and told you that my health was completely wrecked. You gave me a sure-fire rule for regaining my health. Well, it didn't work. I'm a little worse than I was then. When folks talk about your work they never mention your failures. But own up now, aren't there many of them?"

"A good many people who come to talk over their affairs with me fail to find improvement in health, or finances, or whatever the trouble is."

"I thought so. Well, the next time a sick person comes to you, you might tell him that I am one of your failures."

He seemed determined to get that point across. But now the Doctor roused to the defense.

"Benton, if you feel that way, and want to call yourself a failure, I've no right to stop you. But call yourself your own, not my failure. I haven't failed. I believe in good health, and I have excellent health. You are the one who seems to be sick and adrift and perhaps blind and deaf also. I ask you

only to put the blame for this sorry state where it belongs—not on me, and certainly not on God, who is the sum of all good."

"Yes, I see that you have good health, and perhaps that is the reason you cannot understand the bitterness of those stricken down as I am. When I came to you to ask you to help me you said God could heal me, and you said it as if you were sure of it. Now, I'm telling you that He didn't heal me——"

At this point the Doctor interrupted him.

"Benton, I ask you to be honest about this. If you won't be, our interview is hopeless, and we might as well stop talking now. When you asked me to pray for your healing, what did I say?"

Benton was confused, but answered honestly.

"You said that you were no healer, just a teacher, and that you had no special approach to God that would bring an answer to your prayer while another's prayer remained unanswered; that you made connection with God and all His power just as I and any other child of God might do; that you would pray with me but that I must make my own contact with the divine Spirit, and that I would receive my healing as soon as I was able to realize Christ in my life.

"You see, Houston, I did pay attention to what you said, and I did pray with all my might every day. But of course I had the feeling that maybe your prayers would be worth more than mine, since your whole life is given to this kind of work. It

seems that neither of us prayed to any purpose. I suppose you'll say I didn't have faith enough."

"You probably have faith enough if you'd only use it. A static faith isn't of much use. Let me make that clearer by an illustration.

"Picture one of our pioneer grandfathers who settled this fair country standing at the door of his log cabin on an autumn day looking out at the forest that came up to his door. We'll say his hand is resting on a good sharp ax. And then he says dolefully: 'I ought to be getting some of this underbrush cleared away so that I will have some ground ready to plant in the spring. It's going to take a lot of chopping, and I guess I haven't enough axes. If only I had a few more axes I could clear my farm and have good crops on this rich land.' And so the foolish fellow lets the bright autumn slip away while he leans upon his ax and wishes he had enough axes to do the work.

"You're like that pioneer, Benton. He had enough to begin with, only he didn't begin. You have enough faith to begin the job, and faith, unlike the woodman's ax, does not wear out. It increases with use. So you'll have to look somewhere else for your failure. You can't blame either your small faith or God. Now try to reason it out."

"You say the blame comes back on me. Are you telling me that I'm not a good enough man to receive healing?"

"That might be the key to the problem."

"Now you are getting away from any scriptural basis for faith healing. I've read the Bible, and I have noticed that when people came to Jesus for healing He healed them and didn't say anything about how good they were."

"Then you haven't read your Bible with sufficient attention."

The Doctor opened the worn book on his desk and passed it on to his visitor, saying, "Read this." Benton read aloud:

"Afterward Jesus findeth him in the temple, and said unto him, Behold, thou art made whole: sin no more, lest a worse thing befall thee."

Benton looked thoughtful.

"Jesus said that to one man that He had healed," the Doctor went on. "Quite possibly He said something similar to others He healed. You can see that Jesus definitely linked sin and suffering. What kind of sin was Jesus warning the man against? Whatever kind of sin had produced the disease. He was not saying to the man, 'Now don't steal from your neighbors or God will punish you by sending leprosy upon you.' He may have been warning the man against overeating or against living in hate against a member of his family.

"In the Middle Ages they used to call the plagues that swept whole nations the vengeance of God. But they were not the vengeance of God. They were man's vengeance upon himself for breaking the laws of sanitation.

"But we are moving slowly upward on the stairway of Truth. Now we know that the line between the sins of the body and the sins of the mind is a changing, vanishing one. All so-called bodily sins are also sins of the mind, and all sins of the mind react upon the body. Any doctor will tell you that if you live in a state of fear and worry you will cause bodily changes that bring disease. If you entertain thoughts of hate and resentment you will bring about the destruction of cells in your body, and you will suffer accordingly. Some doctors are even agreed on the kinds of disease that various evil mental states set up."

"But, Doctor," protested Benton, "I don't hate anyone."

The Doctor smiled. "You must forgive me, Benton. I just got on one of my hobbies and was riding it at a great rate. There was nothing personal in what I have said. No, Im sure you do not hate anyone, just as I know you do not steal from anyone, or get out a shotgun if a neighbor offends you. But even so you are not without sin. No one is. And in the light of what I have said may I suggest that you consider whether sin has kept you from divine healing. No one can decide that but you.

"Remember that the spiritual-minded have always known that sin sets up a barrier between the soul and God. Isaiah knew it when he said, 'Your iniquities have separated between you and your God.' And Jeremiah observed, 'Your sins have withholden

good from you.' The Psalmist said, 'If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear *me.* Jesus said sadly to His needy hearers, 'And ye will not come to me, that ye may have life.' You see, they are all pointing the same way. We must take down the barrier if we are to have Christ in our life, and with Christ all that comes of union with the Eternal. So look at the matter squarely now and answer your own questions. Is there a reason why you did not get healing?"

Benton's contentious attitude was quite gone. He answered at once and sincerely:

"Yes, I've been tense, and afraid. I never really believed it would happen. I sort of gloated over coming here today to tell you I was no better. I've been bitter and resentful toward God Himself—there are some other things that are just between me and God. I'll not talk about them.

"But will you help me to set myself right? Will you help me to try again?"

"My dear friend, yes. I'll do all that one man can do for another, and that after all is a great deal. You remember what Jesus said about a double prayer. Well, this time we're both really going to pray."

"I need to," said Benton slowly. "The doctor yesterday told me some disquieting things."

"Things probably looked as bad to the doctor as they did to you. Remember, the doctor too is God's minister even as we all are. This one served you

well if he did nothing more than awaken you so that you would really look for the one way out."

"It is the one way. I must find it. Now tell me, what would you do?"

"I'd follow a procedure so simple that a child can understand it. There's nothing complicated or mysterious or beyond a plain man's powers. First take a long, honest look at yourself. Find out those hidden sins and errors. Cast them out, ask God to forgive you, and tell Him you are quite done with them. Then forget them. They no longer have power over you, neither power to break down your body nor to distort your mind.

"Next talk it over quietly with God, as you might talk with an understanding earthly father. Remember 'Father' is the name Jesus gave us for the ruler of the universe when we consider Him in relation to ourselves. Tell God you are in dire need but that you know of the wonderful promises He gave through Jesus. Tell Him that you accept these promises with gratitude. Then make your prayer plainly and trustfully. All the time expect God to do His part. You've done yours when you come in repentance and faith. The rest is up to the Father. Then take your faith, as much as you have—the woodman's one ax, as it were!—and go out and go to work with it."

"Go to work? What shall I do? What can I do?"

"Ah, you are not just at the receiving end of this relationship between God and man. You are at the

giving end too. There must be a constant interchange between God and man if there is to be any health in our soul. What shall you do? I do not know. You must find out for yourself. But I do know that there is something you ought to be doing for your fellow men in the name of Christ. And if you will wait quietly before God, He will tell you what to do.

"I never knew anyone to receive a full healing unless he understood this law of giving and receiving. So many persons when they pray for divine healing expect to sit down where they are and wait for God's grace to come into their life. The way to get God's grace is to keep on going higher on this uphill climb we call life. The Alpine climber will tell you that there is eternal sunshine when you get above the clouds that cling around the mountainside. Well, there is eternal sunshine when we get past the clouds of self and keep going toward God's heights. Forget yourself in service, and your ill-health will vanish unnoticed. Center your thoughts and your prayers on yourself and you will never know freedom.

"Even to those who are so sick that they cannot rise from their bed the same law of giving and receiving must be taught. If you cannot raise your hand to serve another you can raise your heart in prayer, and there is no greater service than that.

"Then after you have repented of all error, made union with the Father through faith, and translated your faith into service there is one more step. Wait

with a quiet heart before God for the first small indication that you are better. Give thanks, full, glowing, rejoicing thanks to God, that you see the light and that healing is coming to you. If you can be thus thankful for the first sense of God's moving in your life, you may be sure the grace of full healing will come quickly.

"Remember, you don't have to persuade God to come into your life. You just have to open the door and let Him in."

The visitor arose. There was no need to ask if he had taken the counsel offered him this time.

"Forgive me, Houston," he said. "I came to blame you, to ridicule the idea that God cared anything about these futile atoms scurrying about this earth. And you've told me to go to a quiet place and meet my Father, and lay all my problems before Him. I think I'll find Him."

"I know you will," said the Doctor.

* * *

It was nearly a year later that Doctor Houston entered the dining car on a transcontinental train to find every table taken. But while he stood near the door a waiter came and said, "The gentleman at the second table asks you to come and dine with him."

The man was standing up with his hand outstretched as the Doctor approached.

"Why, Benton," cried Doctor Houston. "I didn't know you. Man, you're looking perfectly well!"

"And I am well. Sit down, please. This is a godsend to me. I should have visited you long ago, and believe me, it wasn't from ingratitude that I did not come. But ever since I got well enough to take up my business again I have had so many loose ends demanding attention that I've been rushed all the time."

"You are well," said the Doctor, looking at him closely, "body, mind, and spirit. I can see that."

"Yes, thanks to you."

"Oh, no, not to me. You know where your thanks are due, and I can see you have given them."

"I know that you disclaim any credit. But you did tell me how to take the first step on the way that led to freedom. So let me be thankful to you too. On that other debt of thanks I'm paying something every day. You told me to take such faith as I had and get to work with it. At that point I had quit work and was sitting down pitying myself and resenting everything and everybody. I did just what you suggested. I took that little bit of faith and started out to do something. I'm not going to tell you what service God pointed out to me. It's a sort of private matter between God and one other person and me. But it worked. I got so interested in what I was doing that I no longer watched symptoms, and when I did think of my health I was much better.

"I cast out several sins that I had been sort of pampering too. I stopped breaking the physical laws.

I had been breaking several of them for years. When I thought about it I expected God to use His supernatural power to heal me in spite of the way I was treating my body. But after you told me to take an honest look at myself I decided that I'd better put my body too in line with the law. And the others—the very private sins that I wouldn't talk about—I threw them overboard too. For a while they kept bobbing up again and imploring me to take them back in, but with God's help I held out pretty well."

"No doubt you learned the meaning of the last petitions of the Lord's Prayer, 'Leave us not in temptation, but deliver us from evil.' "

"Yes, I think I've learned to say that prayer from the spirit."

He seemed to muse a moment, and then said, "If only there were some way to pass the good word of this great deliverance along to those who need it."

"There is," said the Doctor. "You are doing it, and the thousands who like you have let God fully possess their lives. It's the foremost job on earth for all of us who claim to be His children."

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